







FRIGHT NIGHT

EVER SINCE THE age of nine, I've loved scary stuff. That was the year I constructed a home-made ghost train out of glow-in-the-dark skeletons, and subjected my neighbour's young kids to a terrifying ride through it. Yep, through first watching *Jaws* on TV to hunting down the video nasties in the early 1980s (*Evil Dead* – genius), my formative years were all about seeing how much my friends and I could frighten ourselves.

However, the first videogame that gave me nightmares was Alien, a maze game on the Sinclair ZX Spectrum, where you had to perform tasks while keeping watch for aliens via your motion tracker. If you failed, the crude 2D map disappeared and a dot-matrix graphic of an alien violently flashed up, making you jump off your seat. It's incredible how much videogames have progressed since that game 20 years ago in terms of graphics, but also with creating atmosphere, character and psychological terror. This issue, we have the latest game to cause the pebble-dashing of Y-fronts - F.E.A.R.. Read our exclusive review on page 58 and play the demo on our cover discs if you have the guts.

Also in our scary issue we have Pavel Barter's report on how developers are planning to shit us up (p20), a frightening games feature (p22), a PC ZONE horror Supertest (p136) and an exclusive six-page feature from the set of the new *Doom* movie (p50). Enjoy the mag and remember to lock your doors and windows securely to protect yourself from all the monsters, hell-beasts and psycho-killers. Oh – too late. They're behind you...



Jamie Sefton, editor

Rome: TW
- Barbarian
Invasion



"Chillingly atmospheric and gruesomely beautiful"

"This is the most entertaining freak show since Doom 3"

9/10







PlayStation 2





















REVIEW
Fable: The Lost Chapters



LOOKING BACK
Half-Life 2



l've got an infestation of plague worms to clear up. It's not all gala lunches...

STEVE HILL'S NEVERQUEST





105

Benefiting our impoverished readers since 2005

CONTENTS

UPFRONT

- 16 EPIC ON UT2007
- 18 SIN: EPISODES
- 20 SCARE TACTICS SPECIAL REPORT
- 22 TOP TEN SCARY GAMING MOMENTS
- 33 GHOST RECON:
- ADVANCED WARFIGHTER
- 34 PREY
- 38 BLACK & WHITE 2
- 42 X3: REUNION
- **46 THE MOVIES**
- **48** SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION IV
- 50 DOOM MOVIE

REVIEWS

- 58 F.E.A.R.
- 64 FIFA 06
- **66 TOTAL OVERDOSE**
- 68 ROME: TOTAL WAR BARBARIAN INVASION
- **69 PILOT DOWN: BEHIND ENEMY LINES**
- 70 MYST V: END OF AGES
- 72 MADDEN NFL 2006
- 74 SNIPER ELITE
- 75 NHL 06
- **76 HEROES OF THE PACIFIC**
- 77 ENIGMA: RISING TIDE
- **78 CONFLICT: GLOBAL STORM**
- **82 FABLE: THE LOST CHAPTERS**
- **84 INDIE ZONE**

All the latest from the independent development scene

86 BUDGET

Myst IV: Revelation, Pacific Fighters, CSI: Dark Motives, Alexander and more

- 88 YOUR SHOUT
- 90 BUYER'S GUIDE

HARDWARE

- 93 NEWS
- 94 REVIEWS
- 96 HOW TO...
- 98 DEAR WANDY
- 100 WATCHDOG

FREEPLAY

- 107 LIVE FOR SPEED
- **108 CITY OF HEROES**
- 109 WORLD OF WARCRAFT
- 110 DEMOS
- 112 FREEWARE
- 114 MODS
- 120 FIGHT CLUB
- 122 HOW TO...
- **126 BEST FREE GAMES**
- **130 ABANDONWARE**
- 133 NEVERQUEST

LOOKING BACK

- 134 SPECIAL EDITION
- 136 SUPERTEST
- **138 DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY**
- **142 JEFF MINTER**
- 146 DOMINIK DIAMOND





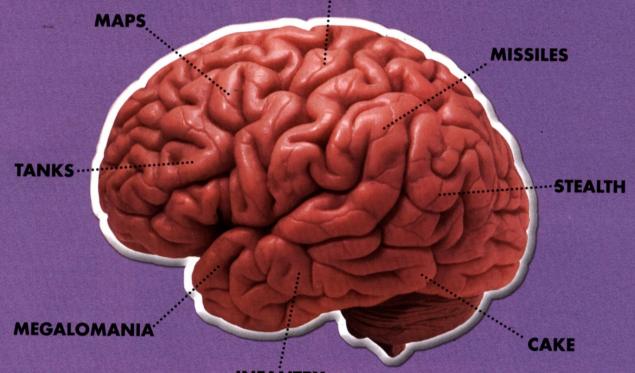
- 58 F.E.A.R.
- 58 F.E.A.R.
- 58 PERHAPS WE SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT THIS BIT OUT BETTER
- 58 F.E.A.R.

Too busy? PC ZONE in 69 words...

Readers letters, free smoothies, Mark Rein on Unreal Engine 4 when we've barely touched number 3, moving swiftly onto episodic SiW and then a bunch of stuff on scary games. Such as F.E.A.R. on the cover. Do you see? Then 0!! 3D Realms, Prez playing god, Hill being rubbish at multiplayer. Oir and Holden going one-one with The Rock. Then a load of reviews, then Minter's llamas. Got it?

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INFANTRY

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"Yes Sir! Your army awaits your command, Sir!
Artillery, Air force and Navy ready, Sir!"

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Victory awaits!

"9 out of 10. The best reason to own a DS."
Games TM



NINTENDODS

ISSUES



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UPFRONT []



ET THE TEAM

Like the Magnificent Seven, without the magnificent part



PAUL PRESLEY VILLAGE ELDER **AGE** Mature LIKES Good things **DISLIKES** Bad things FANCIES Fondant FAVOURITE GAME Reminiscing WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING? EverQuest II. Half-Life 2 (still)

Prezzer (as the cognoscenti know him) has been writing about games since before there were games. Hell, his first review was etched into granite slabs and circulated among the tribal elders for editing. Even then, it said that Cave Dweller Simulator wasn't as good as the titles being carved onto the walls in previous seasons.

He's very old, is what we're saying. And saying it as loud as we want as his hearing packed up some time in the '70s. That said, Prezzer still knows his stuff, mainly because it has his name written on a big label so he can see it clearly.



SUZY WALLACE

Disc Editor

This month La Wallace has felt the wind in her hair as she drives through the sunny streets of Kent. Mainly because someone rammed her car and broke her passenger door off..

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING? Fable: The Lost Chapters, BF2



DAN GRILIOPOULOS

Freelance General

A recent move to London saw Dan G discovering that yes, living in the big smoke drives everyone insane. Still, there will always be his legions of tiny soldiers to keep him sane

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING? The Dig and Star Control II



JAMIE SEFTON

Editor

Our all-action editor is pictured here at the summer retreat for tired journalists. His natural grace and elegance shine through as he copes with the task in a manner befitting his importance

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING? Pirates!, PES5 and The Movies



PHILIP WAND

Hardware Guru

Some say he exists solely in the world of binary on/off switches. Others that he is half-man, half-motherboard. Whatever the truth, we know him best as that bloke wot does the tech stuff.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING? Sven Co-op, Desert Combat



WILL PORTER

News Monkey

This month sponsored by Knorr Vie Shot - the fruit and carrot drink that puts hairs on your chest. If you want to sponsor Will in an upcoming issue, contact the usual address

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING? Aliens Versus Predator 2



STEVE HILL

Freelancer cardshark

The man who won't get out of bed for much at all has this month been brushing up his non-existent poker skills and making friends in fantasy worlds. He's not sure which is worse

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING? FM2005, FM2006 (beta)

STUFF THAT'S HELPED US THIS MONTH... England's cricket team taking it to the Aussies, festivals galore and German chocolate STUFF THAT'S BEEN OF NO HELP WHATSOEVER... Inept computer systems, bank holidays and dodgy firewalls

STUFF WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

SMELLY SHOES 13 Mins Clare and art blokey Jamie discussing new summer sandals that have a dodgy whift. And not of feet.

LOST 248 Mins It's got Charlie from Party Of Five in!

12 Mins Suzy Wallace: "When I go home tonight I'll dress up and see if I can become a man-whore."

COURTNEY LOVE 88 Mins Would you or wouldn't you? Specifically, would Porter? Apparently so

CARROTS

4 Min Why don't they grow in the wild?

MARMALADE 5 Mins Will and Prezzer are against, Suzy thinks they're mad. It's the new Marmite!

29 Mins Mystery Of The Druids – guilty as charged

SCARY GAMES 149 Mins Prezzer is afraid of everything. Sefton doesn't bat an eyelid

OUR RE-DESIGN 160 Mins You're coming round

49 Mins ZONE's song of choice? "GOLD! (Gold!) Always believe in your sooooooul..."

Send your entry on a postcard addressed to. Tiny Compo (160), Pc ZONE, Future Publishing, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP. The first correct entry shat out of systery prize. Closing date: October 12, 2005. The winner of the last Tiny Compo (158) reathead of Doncaster, who knew that Fay Way played the original Ann Darrow in t least lonew enough to look it up on IMDB. Congrats!

LETTERS

Jamie Sefton lives for your letters. Go on, make his day...





I ♥ SUZY

Great new re-design! There's just one improvement I can think of for the future - more Suzy Wallace coverage. I never realised how gorgeous she was until I saw the new photos. Sad isn't it? I ignore her journalistic credentials and concentrate on what she looks like. Trust me, the rest of the PC ZONE team don't have the same affect on me. Well, maybe Steve Hill...

Gavsky

Now look what you've done. You've made Prezzer cry his little eyes out because you don't like him, but fancy his mates Suzy and Steve instead. Shame on you.

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL - £9.99

Just had to write in about the King Kong preview issue 158. Great pictures and insightful game information, but is it just me barking up the wrong tree or is your reviewer, Will Porter, earning extra money on the side by promoting Beyond Good & Evil at every chance?

In all, the reference 'Beyond Good & Evil (now available on budget at a reasonable price of £9.99)' can be found six times throughout the article! Was this just a simple case of misusing the 'search & replace' function on his computer, or maybe something a bit more sinister? Is this the price we had to pay for getting this preview from Michel Ancel? I suspect we'll never know...

Whatever, I went out the next day and bought a copy of Beyond Good & Evil (now available on budget at a reasonable price of £9.99), and what a great game - buy it now! Don Moss

Will denies that he has any vested interest in BG&E and simply says: "Beyond Good & Evil (now available on budget at a reasonable price of £9.99)."

ORIGINAL POINT

First things first - really like the new style of the magazine. Anyway, after reading your review and playing the demo of Fahrenheit, I too was very impressed by this game. You don't know how right you are when you say we need more originality in today's market.

But why say all that stuff about us having to buy these original games and then have *Quake 4*, a game from a genre that has been done to death, on your front cover? Why not put Fahrenheit there? Surely the best way to get this

kind of originality into the market is for magazines like yours to really, really put it out there?

Us gamers in the know, who buy magazines and read relevant stuff on the Interweb are lucky - we'll buy Fahrenheit thanks to the demo and the numerous good reviews it will get. But you have to try harder to get the more casual gamer to get these kind of games, instead of having them waste money on the latest FIFA outing.

Yep, good point Jon. We love original games on PC ZONE, which is why we awarded Fahrenheit 90 per cent and a Classic award - it moves storyline and characterisation in PC games to a new level. However, much as we'd love to put Fahrenheit on our cover, we're a commercial mag that has to sell issues to stay in business - the new mega-shooter from id or a great-but-obscure story-driven French adventure? It's a no-brainer. Not everyone who browses the mag shelves is as clued-up as you, I'm afraid.

CRUEL WORLD

So, I start watching the Grand Prix at the weekend, and guess what I want to do straight after that? Yep, play Grand Prix 4. Then I go walking around my neighbourhood, looking at all the wealthy houses, wondering what's inside. And when I get home, I pop GTA: San Andreas on. Then I have this weird, f****d up dream with all these pygmies and cherubs and such, with glowing eyes and all that grizzly stuff and Jamie Sefton – and guess what? It's Doom 3 time (with a little bit of The Suffering for good measure). And then I watch the news, with all that violence and Iraq stuff. What can I do? Well, look at that! A massive Battlefield 2 demo on your DVD. And it's utter bliss. When the world is shit, play a game. Most people don't understand, but I know you guys do. Ambs



Battlefield error?

I'm writing to complain about the lack of realism in games, with particular reference to Battlefield 2. I've been playing this for many hours now, and have been team-killed by the US forces only once or twice. Is this a lazy oversight or is there a patch due to rectify this?

Steve Murray

Cheeky, I hope George Bush doesn't read this. Anyway, have a new XFX graphics card on us.



Well, serendipity now! The two needs have collided, right here, right now. Write us a letter today. If it wins Letter of the Month we'll send you a prize tomorrow.



When the world is shit, play a game. Most people don't understand – but I know that you guys do...

Thanks Ambs - we do understand, it's true. I'm glad the medication is kicking in nicely too.

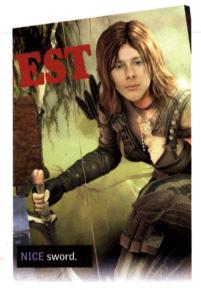
NOB HILL

While sitting on the bog the other day browsing through my collection of PC ZONEs, imagine my surprise and amusement when I saw a picture of Steve Hill not only dressed as a laydee but also holding a rather bulbous-looking object in his right hand! If you haven't already spotted it, it's on page 115 of May's issue. Keep up the good work. Allan

This is the 74th email we've received on the bizarre designer error on the 'NeverQuest' page in issue 154, and it gives us a nice excuse to print the offending picture again. I can't see what all the fuss is about...

PARADISE FOUND

Upon reading the Freeplay section of PC ZONE 159, I loved your magazine more than ever. The fantastic N is a game I'd already played. Someone had managed to get it onto my school's network, yet to my horror it had been



deleted by the tyrannical admins and was lost. I searched high and low, but 'stick-men and puzzles' don't return the best results in Google. So, thanks for bringing this fantastic game back to my life.

Stephen Dickenson

Our pleasure Stephen. We've got loads more free stuff for you in this month's Freeplay, including five full-and-complete games (page 126). Aren't we nice?

OUT AND PROUD

I've never thought of myself as a geek, just someone who enjoys videogames. My girlfriend occasionally calls me a geek, especially when I recently dragged her round every newsagents in Mallorca to find the new issue of PC ZONE. But the other day I cleared out my room and found loads of old PC ZONE mags, as well as glossy lifestyle mags all with your favourite babes on, and decided to throw away the lads' mags and keep my copies of PC ZONE. I'm worried I might be a geek-in-denial - after all, I couldn't imagine life without MSN. **Howard Harrison**

Yes, I'm afraid Howard, it looks like you may have geeky tendencies. These feelings sometimes happen in your teens and may well carry on into adult life. Nothing to worry about - just try to live your life as normal and most decent people will accept you for the person you are.

HEAVY METAL

Having read Pavel's special report, 'Who Killed Sam & Max?' last issue, I thought I'd write to you in support Love the new look, style, everything. Usually with changes, it's a case of 'this feels too different', but vou've done an excellent job. Glad it's remained all the same faces and humour; and no, I'm not drunk... mikeruss4

Always hated the Supertests, so putting them on the discs was a great idea. Unfortunately, hearing the voices of the PCZ team makes them seem mundane and human - they should be mythical, funny entities in far off reviewer land... goattail

I've just listened to that Supertest, Prezzer sounds like he's on an East End market stall. Wallace sounds like his assistant. Will sounds like a rookie city trader. And Sefton's from Yorkshire? He's been down south far too long. madameye

My six-year-old loved the hologram-thingy™ on last issue's cover. slackdog

Join the forum fun at www.pczone.co.uk

For three years ZONE staff members have worked to craft renowned creator of Analytical Psychology, Dr Carl Jung (1875-1961), out of metal. A fount of knowledge, fed with gaming data from past and present, he exists for your enlightenment...



DEAR DR JUNG

Q What the hell is happening with STALKER these days? I read on the Net that it was skating on thin radioactive ice. Yours, Nathan Halliday

The perpetually delayed Shadow Of Chernobyl remains in development, despite unfounded rumours bouncing around the halls of the recent Games Convention in Leipzig prompted by its no-show. Although no set release date is currently on the register, the wild ambition of GSC Gameworld clearly proving hard to beat into a commercial game, THQ claims that any talk of canning or cancellation is totally unfounded. Rust may have eaten me by the time it does come out though.

DEAR DR JUNG

Q Didn't I read in ZONE that someone was making some sort of follow-up to System Shock 2? Is it System Shock 3 or what?

Mell #1, after poor System Shock creator Looking Glass was liquidated, the rights to its games were sold off in a bizarre way that only about two people on Earth comprehend. EA appears to hold most of the rights, but the possibility of a 'true' System Shock 3 is lost in legal hell. Irrational however, formed from the ashes of Looking Glass, is working on what it calls a 'spiritual successor' called BioShock. The odds are that it will be amazing. *Bzzt*.

LETTERS

@ letters@pczone.co.uk

letters, pc zone, future publishing, 99 baker st, london, wlu 6fp

of resurrecting this potential classic. However, there are also many cases of this happening to other titles such as the *Metallica* game that has also been killed. I know the game would have probably been a bit rubbish, but as a huge fan of *Metallica*, I would've loved to have played it – especially as it was also going to contain new tracks. Once again the game was near completion, but business rules everything now.

Adam Matthews

We've had tons of emails and letters supporting our 'Bring Back Sam & Max' campaign, so keep 'em coming. However Adam, yours is the first we've had asking publishers to bring back the *Metallica* game. We'll do our best, but maybe the demise of this particular title was a mercy killing...

PC THRONE

There's nothing I like more than taking a banging shit while reading *PC ZONE*, or better yet, reading it in the bath. Mind you, if you could laminate my copies, it'd save me the trouble of going down the shop each time I drop it in the water. **Mark Hales**

Thanks Mark. Charming stuff.

BACK PAIN

If you're like me and play on your PC more than you should, then you must know how well your chair is suited from how painful your back is. I'm sure you nice people at *PC ZONE* must get suggestions of what to add in your hardware buyer's guide all too often, but what about 'long-term user seats'? Whenever I try to replace my chair, I always end up with the most uncomfortable piece of crap ever (that also breaks in no time at all). My back can't take it anymore – please help!

Considering most of the team are now bent double and have humps the

size of small countries, we're not the best people to recommend something to help your posture. The only item we've come across recently is the rather silly Gameulator seat and desk arrangement, here modelled by the young Porter. A snip at £300.

ONLINE EVOLUTION

So Pro Evolution Soccer 5 is looming on the horizon, eh? Although the thought of the latest Konami masterpiece landing on my doorstep has, in the past, made me wet my pants in anticipation, this time I'm filled with suspicion. It's only been a year since the generally wonderful PES4 appeared, but I truly hope that this time Konami isn't rushing it, because the online issues in the game are near-crippling and urgently need work. If the unnecessarily bad lag doesn't get you, then the unfathomable router problems are certain to. Do me a favour - tell 'Seabass' that if he doesn't get it right, I'm sending the boys round. Phil

Well, Shingo 'Seabass' Takatsuka promised me last year that the PC online side of things would be properly sorted for *PES5*. I'm actually interviewing him again in October, when I'll hopefully find out if the new game has been fixed to include proper multiplayer features – including the rumoured 2v2-player option. If not, I'll be in touch with you Phil, and we'll both pay him an unscheduled visit...

THE height of cool.

MAG SUGGESTION

I used to program back in the 1980s when it was just 2D graphics. Maybe you could do a section on how today's 3D games do detection and how they know where everything is? For instance, it used to be easy to tell if you were on a platform, you just checked the colour of the pixel beneath the sprite.

Adrian Wood

Erm, OK. Why the hell not. वस्य

IDIOT'S CORNER

Real calls from real idiots...

PCZONE

PC ZONE, hello?

IDIOT

(rapid speak) Alright, it's John dahn in Sarfend, on the coast – where it's all 'appening mate. Just wanted to say got the new issue mate, very impressed. Very impressed wiv the new cover.

PCZONE

Er, thanks!

IDIOT

(still rapid) Yeah, very impressed can't wait for the next one. How about a big poster inside – Half-Life 2 on one side, Max Payne on the other? Would be very cool. That's it, bye. (hangs up)

PCZONE

Hello? Hello?

The Big Question

What genre of film will prove most popular in The Movies?



- 1 Porn: 28%
- 2 Sex: 24%
- 3 Dirty: 26%
- A Erotica: 21%
- 5 Other: 1%

PEZONE November 05

JA

SHATTERED LANGER

A Nation in Ruins

Command a new Southern Confederacy or storm America under the banner of a United European Union.

This is your chance to lead any one of seven factions fighting for control of the war torn US.

Your tactics in battle will have serious political consequences... lead wisely.





TAKE OUT THE ENEMY



TAKE BACK THE NATION





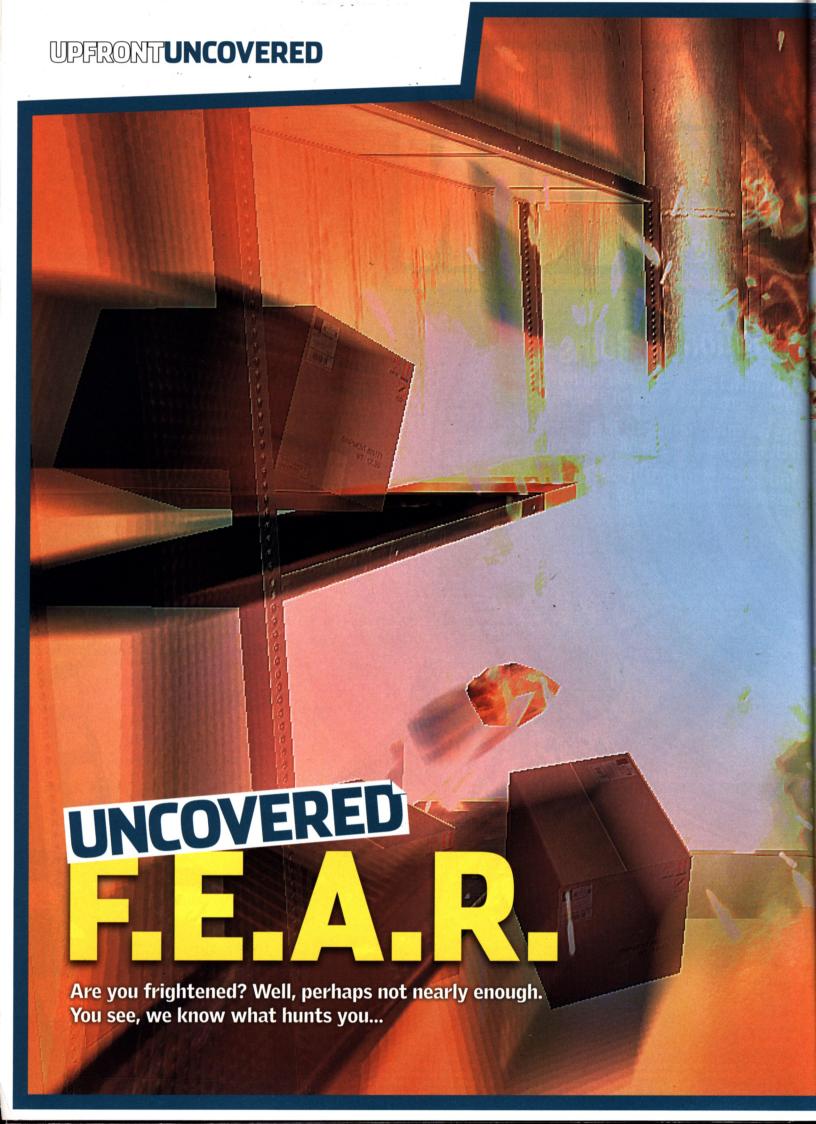






















The No.1 best-seller returns for a new season

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Then there's the squad to hand pick, the training to restructure, the media mind-games to master, not to mention your own future to secure. One thing's for sure, this season, it's going to be tougher than ever.



Half time team talks:

A collective kick up the backside, or a quiet word in the ear of the ball-shy millionaire you're regretting buying? Lift the players as individuals or come down on them as a team as a whole? This is your 15 minutes to take control of the game.



Training module:

Monitor every element of your players' performance, from their stamina to their state of mind, so you can see who's fit for the starting line-up and who's ready for the transfer list. Whether you work them into the ground, or give them a rest, with the right tweaks to the training schedule, you might just turn a one trick pony into a utility player, or improve that wasteful winger's crossing.



Player interaction:

This is more than tactics and tantrums. You need to know just how to manage a player to get the best out of them. If you don't, they'll soon be airing their grievances in public, before slapping in their transfer requests. It's going to test your man-management skills to keep morale high.



Snapshot:

You can't just pull game-winning strategies out of the air. You need all of the information at your fingertips, all of the time. Latest players stats, up-coming fixtures, league tables, not to mention how much is left in the transfer budget and whether it's about time you put in for a wage increase.

Football Manager 2006. It's going to take a new style of management if you're going to triumph this season. It's more sophisticated, more demanding, but more accessible than ever before, with fresh challenges to overcome and more than 25 new features to master.

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ANTY OUN SHOP

PCZONE

UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the world of PC gaming

NEWS EDITOR Will Porter

Noob Forever

T WAS CRUELLY brought home to me in this month's Fight Club that I was not made for online gaming. My brain just doesn't seem to be wired in the correct way. It was probably having fallen overboard from the lip of an aircraft carrier and bobbing helplessly for a full five minutes. whimpering plaintively to my fellow gamers for advice and/or rescue, that I realised this. (Thanks for the pick-up by the way, C-Killer). In Counter-Strike or Deathmatch I'm fine: here's a gun, kill those bad men. I can deal with that. As soon as I'm in Battlefield or Planetside though, a psychological blue screen of death descends with damning speed.

"Go here! Go there! Flank!
Covering Fire!" For me, working out the flow of a round of *BF2* is like someone trying to analyse that flowing green code that represents the ebbs and flows of the Matrix. I'm just clueless, and far more content to drive jeeps off cliffs and accidentally attempt to fly my helicopter upside down. Sometimes people laugh, and I pretend that they like me, although most of the time they're content to call me noob and shun me.

And so it is, that if you ever encounter Batsphinx on the ZONE BF2 servers, then I beg you to be nice to him. Treat him as you would a confused two-year-old, and ignore his habit of walking into walls, picking up spent bullet cases and attempting to put them in his mouth. Congratulate him for even managing to navigate the server browser despite his backward ways. I'm a noob, but I know my weaknesses and I'm proud. Just don't get into a helicopter with me – that way trouble lies.



PC ZONE Why announce Unreal Engine 4 when Unreal Engine 3 was only revealed last year? MARK REIN It

shouldn't come as a great surprise that we've been working on Unreal Engine 4

for the past two years – I mean engines don't just appear when you need them! We were creating UE3 for years before we announced it. However, Unreal Engine 4 will be totally ground-breaking and will change the way games will be done in the future. I don't expect it to be staffed up as a full team for several years, but I want people to know that when they come to work at Epic, they can with the knowledge that we're always keeping one eye on the

Unreal Engine 4...

future, and that they're going to be shaping the future of the videogame business.

PCZ Some developers have commented that next-gen game development will increase costs dramatically...

MR Not with UE3. I know that's a sales pitch, but it's true – we'll achieve a true next-generation game in *UT2007* with a team and budget that's only 30-50 per cent larger than the last generation. This is because we spent so much money on the engine side to empower a smaller team to be competitive and able to do a next-generation game. We absolutely don't want to have a game team with 80 people on it – we can't manage that and we're not that well organised!

PCZ So what's happening with *UT2007* at the moment?

MR UT2007 is about a year away, so we're currently building content and levels. We're at the ideas stage, which is really exciting. Epic takes every idea seriously, whether it's from a game journalist playing early code, through fan forums and guys working on different elements of the game. UT2007 is putty right now, and nowhere near the final product, but we're feeling it out, playing levels over and over and reworking. You know when a game is going right when the testing sessions go beyond the set time

STOP PRESS!

Broken Sword 4

That's right gang, Sir Stobbart is coming back. THQ and Revolution have announced a fourth adventure for the dim blond – but will he retain his 3D environs?

Psychonauts

Rejoice! Tim Schafer's 90%-er is on its way courtesy of THQ – picking up where Majesco left off in distributing its titles this side of the water. Ra-ra Razputin!

Land Of The Dead

Zombies are brilliant. Though when your game gets renamed *LOTD: Road To Fiddler's Green* you wonder if the marketing men aren't braindead themselves.



Episodes

almost ready for comsumption. John R Blade is back and in episodic form.



Call Of 26

ZONE fights on the beaches, on the landing grounds, in the fields and in the streets. We shall never surrender.



Doom Movie

Cinematic pap or the greatest game tie-in of all time? ZONE bags an exclusive set visit and star interviews





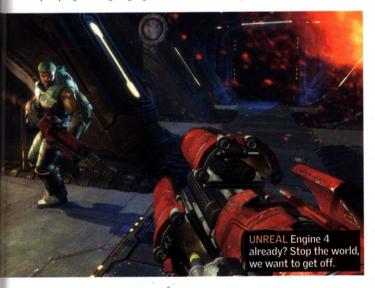
PCZ Are you going to look after the mod community with UT2007? MR Oh yeah - with mods, we've barely scratched the surface. Mod-makers will have exactly the same capabilities that we have to make the game. I mean Unreal Engine 2 is obviously a great mod engine, but with our UE3 creation tools, which will ship with the finished UT2007, it will just be incredible what people will come up with. We want to give more power to artists, so there's no complex programming language needed,

on playing.

for example. I mean one of our guys created an entire game in a day with this technology! We'll also be running more competitions like Make Something Unreal to encourage innovation.

PCZ What's been your favourite moment of development for UT2007 so far?

MR For me it would be seeing everything come together for our E3 presentation – a real watershed moment. We had a rough UT2004 up and running on the new engine, but to see the new UT2007 with a complete new level, that feeling of being in a complete world - that really did it for me. I really wish you could see the new characters we're working on at the moment - they're amazing! We're not going to rush the game, but it's going to be spectacular when it's done. Oh yeah, it's coming baby..



Orc Source

Arkane Studios reveals more on action RPG, *Dark Messiah*

www.arkane-studios.com

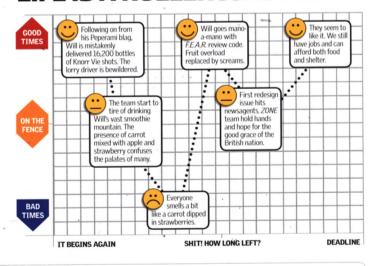
A recent presentation at the Leipzig Games Convention revealed more about Dark Messigh, a first-person shooter RPG set in the Heroes Of Might & Magic universe. You'll be able to play Dark Messiah in many different ways - as a warrior, mage or assassin (or a mixture of all three) - and approach challenges however you want, in what Arkane Studios describes as a "multi-play style". To prevent the coming of a Dark Messiah, you can despatch the game's many evil creatures using melee weapons such as swords, casting spells and employing stealth – although apparently the best weapon is the environment and your



imagination. Because Valve's Source engine creates such an immersive world, with objects that have a real weight, you can use this to say, topple a pillar on top of enemies, or even fire an ice spell on a bridge and watch the orcs slip and slide to their deaths. One to watch.

State Of Play, a massive UK games show, has been announced so that the great unwashed that is the British public can get their grubby mitts on games so new that they probably haven't even been invented yet. Tons of PC stuff will be there, plus lots of 'cool' things like sexy ladies, skaters and an 'Urban Ghetto'. Taking place in Birmingham at the NEC, and kicking off on October 14 for three days, visit www.stateofplay.net for elucidation.

LIFE IS A ROLLERCOASTER





PIGEON SLOWLY flaps its way through Freeport City before disappearing in a cloud of bird blood. One hoodlum compliments another on his shot, before having a laugh about a cop he shot in the head. "Ha ha ha!" he says. "Ha Ha Ha!" the other agrees. "Surprise!" shouts John R Blade, head of gun-toting security firm HardCorps, as his chopper descends from the sky and bullets fill the air. The year is 1998 and we're playing SiN – the game that wasn't Half-Life.

"We've wanted to return to the *SiN* universe for years now," explains Steve Nix, CEO of Ritual Entertainment, when probed on the lengthy absence of Blade and his busty nemesis Elexis Sinclaire.

"But given the importance of the franchise to the studio, it had to be under the right circumstances. SiN is our pride and joy and we really wanted to do it right."

REMEMBER ME?

As every year has passed, memories of SiNTEK, human experiments, ATM machines that you could fiddle with and Sinclaire's chest have grown dimmer and dimmer in the gaming community. Now is the time, however for HardCorps' return. To start the ball rolling, a viral marketing campaign was kicked off at www.legionpharma.com and www.sinclairetechnologies.com – giving a strong in faction that there was either an exceptionally fanboy-ish group of scientists on the loose, or that SiNTEK were once more up to no good.

Then came surprising news: Black Mesa and Freeport City, 1998's alpha and omega, were to become bedfellows. "We'd been talking with Valve for several years about distributing a product directly to gamers through Steam, and then the light bulb came on," explains Nix. "We had worked on so many new designs, characters and interesting moments for the next *SiN* game, that it all came together really quickly once we made the decision to go."

And so it is that Source-formed episodes of shootery that last six or so hours each are set to start appearing for purchase in your Steam tray at regular intervals for the next few years. Blade's chunky magnum pistol is back, his hacker sidekick JC is back, Sinclaire is back and Blade himself is back – now accompanied by a pneumatic young lady called Jessica Cannon. It's four years after *SiN* and our hero still hasn't been able to prove that Sinclaire is behind the worrying upward trend of mutant-ness

We're fighting on roads, that much is definite, and mutant laboratories are probably high on the list as well





SCARETACTICS

Scared witless by your latest PC game? You're not alone...



ReporterPavel Barter

HE HORROR,
THE horror, etc!
-From the paintsplattered zombies
in Half-Life 2 to the
haunted wheelchairs of
Silent Hill 3, research

conducted for this report left your reporter quivering like a shitting dog. Why do we do this to ourselves time after time? Why spend your evenings convincing yourself that an as-yet unseen assailant is about to pounce?

"How often, after childhood, are you really scared?" asks California State University media psychologist Stuart Fischoff. "It's a chance to test your personal mettle. You know it's not real but you can pretend it is. It's the closest thing to a nightmare, yet you're in control." PC games can now be a runaway train of terror, and developers have more psychological tricks up their sleeves than TV witch Derren Brown, scaring us with weird lighting, claustrophobic

environments, hideous beasts and gasty stories. "By keeping our biggest scares in-game, we emphasise a type of horror that no other entertainment medium can touch," chuckles Richard Rouse III, creative director and writer on *The Suffering: Ties That Bind.*

CAGED BEAST

Two main neurotransmitters engage our emotions when playing videogames, continues Fahrenheit's developer David Cage. "Adrenalin is created when you face danger: your body prepares to fight or to flee. There's an increase in blood pressure, heartbeat, the level of sugar in the blood. You start to sweat, digestion stops, muscles and skin are stretched. Dopamine is generated each time there's an effort and a reward, creating a pleasant feeling."

Developers not only push our emotional buttons by creating beasties that scream "boo!" at improper moments, they also insert psychological elements into the gameplay. The inhuman bastards. *Call Of Cthulhu: Dark Corners*

 Of The Earth – aditty based on the demented writings of HP Lovecraft – is set to employ "a sanity system that triggers a mix of audio and visual effects during gameplay," according to producer Chris Gray. "The only indication you get that your sanity is running low is through your heartbeat and breathing."

Audio is another prime way in which developers torture PC punters. Remember Max Payne's creepy maze sequence with the baby crying in the background? Or the random wails in Silent Hill? "A clanging sound from a dark cellar or inhuman screams from behind a closed door is as effective in stimulating fear as a room full of zombies," continues Gray. "Another technique is to associate a specific sound, musical piece or even voice with something horrific. If you do this early you can use the sound at any stage later in the game to create fear."

HOUSES OF HORROR

Feverish imagination won over ugliness in the old days – *3D Monster Maze* and text adventures such as 1986's *Moonmist* perhaps benefiting from the novelty of immersive gaming and the youth of those playing. The advent of modern shocks was to come in 1993, with a game that single-handedly kick-started the entire survival horror genre: *Alone In The Dark*.

Frederick Raynal, French creator of this haunted-house adventure, was inspired by scary flicks from the '70s and '80s (his dad owned a video store). "I noticed that the structure of some – the hero being trapped and having to survive in a hostile environment – would be perfect for a game. When I created Alone In The Dark, 3D graphical techniques were quite poor. So I had to find other ways to create something visually frightening and used text to reach new levels of scary description."



Is there anything you want Pavel Barter to investigate? (Warning: some jobs might be considered too big or too small...)

@ letters@pczone.co.uk

pavel barter, pc zone,
99 baker st, london, wlu 6fp



From Silent Hill to Resident Evil, Alone In The Dark's presence is felt to this day, but static cameras and lengthy key-hunts are no longer the extent of our ghoulish pleasure. Jordan Thomas, designer of Thief: Deadly Shadow's infamous Cradle level, is spooked by "the perversion of something that was once human and the unsettling blend of pity and shock one feels as a result. Nothing beats the doomed menagerie of System Shock 2."

Thomas shivers: "As primitive as they were visually, the soldiers' piteous pleas for a merciful death, along with the twisted maternal cooing of the midwives made you want to dry-heave with pity."

But did it scare its creators too? Ken Levine, puppet-master behind this 1997 classic, nods stoically in response. "Yes, we were always terrified... Terrified of going out of business. Either the game turned out well, or we were going to be flipping burgers for the rest of our lives."

MONSTER LOVE

System Shock 2's monsters were as pitiful as they were hideous and Levine left data logs on many blooded carcasses, detailing their change from human to beast, "so that players could empathise with their foes". Creating compassion for game characters is the future of fear, as is the exploration of real-world terrors, agrees Richard Rouse III.

In *The Suffering* sequel, *Ties That Bind*: "A large portion of the game is set

in the brutal and impoverished streets of East Baltimore, so all the creatures have been themed after the horrors of urban decay. Some are connected to starvation, drug abuse, gun violence and the lynch mob – all very real-world problems and inherently disturbing subjects, which makes them perfect for a horror game."

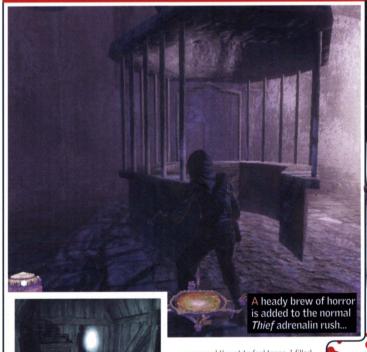
Rouse continues: "Our Creeper character gets a lot of strong responses from the development team, particularly with his intense appearance and dialogue. He's a man who's spent his life torturing women, and popular consensus is he must be one of the most twisted videogame characters ever seen."

Why do real-world fears scare us more than zombies and vampires? Stuart Fischoff has an answer: "Adults are less frightened by what appears to be scary, more so by abstract threats like the end of the world, authoritarian societies, potential cannibalism and religious fears. We're frightened by (what's inside) someone's heart, less by their face."

Developers are torn with dilemmas when creating horror titles. How can we build tension when players want a FPS frenzy? How can we create fearsome scenes when our studio is as atmospheric as a scout hall? The answer lies in a growing appreciation for story-telling, character empathy and psychological scare tactics – that and things jumping out and going "ragh!" when you weren't expecting it. That does the trick too.

The hand that rocked the cradle

Level designer Jordan Thomas on Thief 3's creepy Cradle...



Thomas tells us: "I left the first half of the mission physically empty. It's all immersive mind games, for the sake of anticipation. Sound cues, flutters of scripted motion. For a fast-moving,

corporeal threat to feel tense, I filled the latter half of the mission with twitching semi-humanoid undead patients from the violent ward of the asylum. There are only nine of them – a small number, relative to other missions – but they're quick and hard to kill permanently. It was the height of pleasure to hear the most jaded tester yelp like a schoolgirl in a snakepit."

They mostly come at night. Mostly...

Will Porter is your guide from behind the sofa...

EMBERS OF THE ZONE team remain famously frightened by both the dog in Fraggle Rock and the theme-tune from Chock-a-Block. Unsurprisingly, they don't

fare well in the scary canon of PC gaming either. Here, we outline ten of the moments that had us clawing at the scenery and weeping like the scaredy girls we are...

01 Wolfenstein 3D

Large blue man shouting in guttural German

We'd never even contemplated a FPS before *Wolfenstein*, and the fact that enemies could be anywhere and could move from place to place gave us the willies. The stand-out moment of terror, however, came when you discovered that bosses, previously 2D, were very much part of id's vision. Opening an innocuous door towards the end of the shareware levels, and coming pistol to dual mini-gun with a gigantic blue-clad Aryan was a moment of pure primal fear...

Smash and grab, the headcrab way
What's that? What's that Mr Zombie? You've just killed a hapless
scientist and we're standing behind Perspex, completely unarmed,
where you can't get us? Is that what you're trying to say? What a
shame, this solid-looking window must torture your Xen-addled mind!
What's that? You've picked up the scientist, and... What are you? No!

Smash! No! Jesus God! We need a gun! We need a gun!

03 Doom

Is hell this scary?

Take one gigantic rocket-toting minotaur-thing, place him in an arena that's comprised of many, attached, and identical, triangular spaces so that you often forget where he is and add to the mix a barely pubescent Will Porter. What do you get? Well, not a serious girlfriend for a while that's for sure. Plus, a level that may have had his 486 reeling from intense jerk-o-vision – but also left him in a state of catatonic shock that he's never recovered from...

O4 X-Com: Terror From The Deep

Don't go back to the water

Turn-based action: is there anything scarier? Probably. But, despite being immune to any fear in *X-Com's* non-aquatic adventures, man oh man, the underwater action in *Terror From The Deep* freaked us out. With its ethereal atmosphere, slowly plodding alien-hunters and unfamiliar colours, turning a corner to have the fog of war lifting on two worryingly fast creatures was guaranteed to tie our diaphragm in knots in the back of our throats. Seems more than a bit silly now mind...



Medal of Honor: Allied Assault

"Not really, he used the money to buy new knees..."

OK, so not the scariest of scary games. But for a wusses like us, true terror came in the form of the guard dogs in the snowbound Norwegian levels. There we were, sniping patrolling soldiers from afar, when we happened to angle the scope down a bit and see a flash of black and brown charging towards us. "Jesus Christ! Change weapon! Argh! No bullets left! It's got my legs! It's got my legs!"

Turns out all you need for a good scare is something fast with teeth...







06 Half-Life

Electronic equipment to stun and awe

Out of all the headcrabs, the zombies and the plethora of Ravensholm shocks in HL2, the other Freeman-associated scare we'd like to flag up is a piece of electronic equipment that falls over. Not exactly the most sophisticated scare in the world, but one that had us hit the roof: the experiment has gone wrong, you've just seen a glimpse of the other side, scientists have perished and then - a minor explosion nudges a mainframe at exactly the wrong/right time. Gordon Freeman wouldn't say boo to a goose, he'd just look at it quizzically, but Valve would presumably do so before battering it to death with a crowbar...

Hi! I'm a Trigen. I'll kill you now...

and the 'Ooh, I'm in Jurassic Park vibe has a squat concrete building at its close. Terror resides within, or at least the first time you get an indoor encounter with beasties who could be anywhere within the facility. Then, in a darkened room with a swaying light, a human leg is spat out of a ventilation duct - and two swipes of a claw probably carve Carver in half. We wouldn't know though: we were too busy whimpering under the desk.

08 Far Cry

The end of the level with the overhanging bridges

09 Thief: Deadly Shadows

The nastiest orphanage in all recorded history



One level in Thief 3 stands out as the ultimate haunted house experience that money can buy. Well, the ultimate haunted gothic orphanage-come-asylum experience anyway. Honestly, some members of the team remain physically unable to

complete the Cradle level. It's an example of immaculate design and pure terror. It conveys the same feelings of solitude and (at first) unseen chaos as the Overlook Hotel in The Shining - with an immense build-up of spooky nothingness, before a slow but ever-increasing leakage of horrors, darkness and jumps. You think they're all locked in their cells. But they're not. They're really not. And neither they, nor the Cradle itself, want you there at all...



Aliens Versus **Predator 2**

07

The midwives.

No explanation

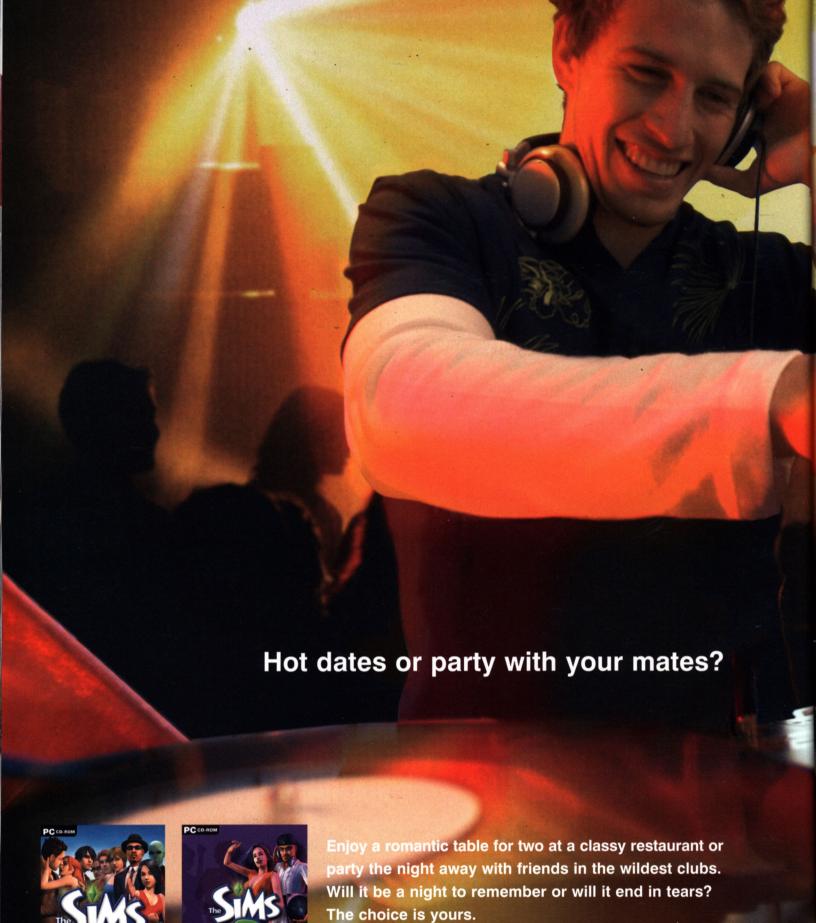
needed really.

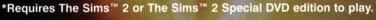
In space, no-one can hear you scream

In an amazing game (the marine third of it anyway), the stand-out moment of terror came when you ventured deep into an Alien nest to save a fellow marine. It had everything Alien: the lift, the steam, the hatching eggs

and the comrade encased in green goo begging for a swift death. But it didn't have the grown-up aliens guarding it. Well, not until everything went tits-up and tons of Aliens charged after you, making you furiously back-pedal through levels, shutting painfully slow electronic doors to stem the flow and hoping that the only Aliens around were the ones you were fending off from behind. Pure gaming fear. PCZ



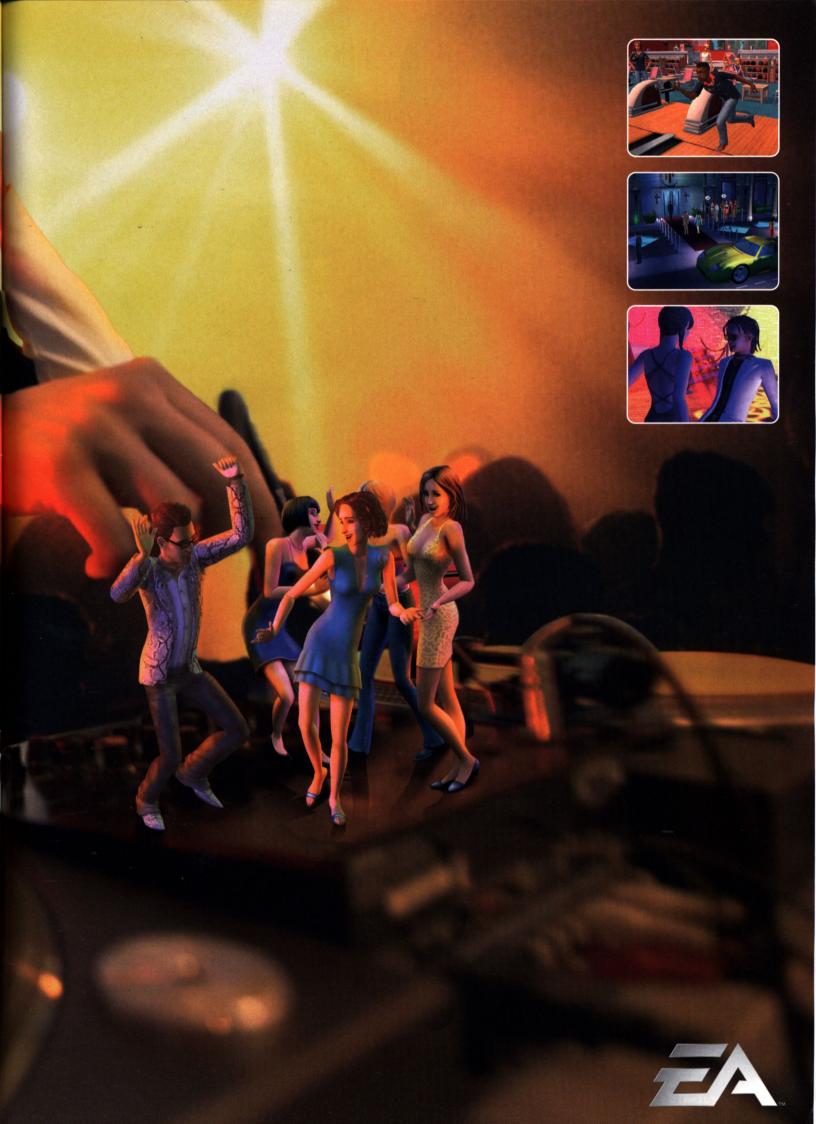




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How will you play with life?





do move I'm killed without ceremony, and

of faux-non-linearity over their levels - with



UPFRONTHANDS-ON





Call Of Duty 2 rids itself of a perennial FPS hanger-on: the med-pack

A soldier regenerates



In a move that's becoming ever more common (see King Kong), COD2 is disposing with health bars, first aid kits randomly scattered through levels, and medics with miracle syringes that seemingly contain the tears of little baby Jesus. Instead, when you're pounded by bullets, you die - but if you don't die, then taking shelter for a while will allow your health to slowly regenerate, even if you have to guess at your health levels by red tinges, heavy breathing and the like. Hardly realistic, but a radical move - and one that really seems to work. No more sauntering around with the knowledge you're on full health and with a backpack full of magic, healing pixie dust, no more scouting around in cupboards for miracle cures. Just hard, gritty grit.

marketplace manned by the enemy, the more Call Of Duty intensity™ goes through the roof. When you tot in the restrained, yet still spectacular, ragdolls - even more so.

While we're on the AI though, I ought to highlight a slight concern that may hinder what I consider to be COD2's unstoppable rise to greatness – the much vaunted battle chatter system. In its more mundane parts, it works and works well if a little over-reliant in the North African chapters on having Cockneys shouting stuff like "Die you dirty Jerry-rotter!". A f**k or two would have been nice.

But I digress. While fighting through a Russian city mission, itself a work of wonder, and attempting to reassemble a broken communications cable, my comrades were getting extremely twitchy. "Over there!" they cried - although I was cowering beneath an exposed desk and couldn't see them pointing. "By that broken sitting in another room and eating sandwiches, paid for by you, the tax-payer.

EASTERN PROMISE

But let's have a poke around this Russian level I'm outlining, as it's pretty special. The helpless feeling of being ill-equipped and, indeed, unarmed that COD nailed so hard in the opening Russian chapters certainly wasn't on show in the level that I played if anything, the game encourages you to swap between friendly and enemy weapons far more than either its progenitor or its pro-progenitor MOH: Allied Assault. Then again, there's more chaos and thereby more bullets needed to deal with it - at least in the chunk of warfare I played.

At the start you're doing stuff like creeping into what in pre-war would have been the basement of a gutted house, and looking up at three outcrops of what were once floors, each packed with Nazis. It

Even with its tracks blown off, the tank still nigh-on pulverised me

wall!" they shouted - even though we were in a ruined city and all the walls were broken. "They're coming from the East!" they screamed - even though I wouldn't know which way East was if I was standing on a beach in Eastbourne. Perhaps when playing through completed code I'll start to learn the way the chatter relates to gameplay a bit more - maybe then it'll convince me. But until then the jury is

becomes clear that Infinity Ward has taken its established melding of war-torn images and iconography with level design on a few more paces than its last tour of duty. Moving on though, despite suffering heavy losses, myself being the culprit of an accidental friendly kill on more than one occasion, we pushed the enemy back far enough to restore the communications line - and the word was given to take sticky





bombs and return to the scene of my earlier hiding-under-a-desk escapade, to deal with patrolling tanks that had cut in behind our advance.

Crouching behind scenery, running, ducking and throwing smoke grenades to mask my progress, I made it back. Sneaking up behind a big metal thing (I'm not going to pretend I know what kind of tank it was - it was German and had guns on it), I attached my explosives to its tracks. And this is where it was hammered home to me, even more than my initial North African scrambles of shit-pantery, why I'm set to adore COD2. Other games would be content to say, "Wow. There goes the tank in a big explosion. Level over. Have a banana. And a medal." But that's not enough for Infinity Ward. No, the tank is still just as dangerous as it ever was. Its tracks blown off, it still nigh-on pulverised me as I scampered from the scene, and while it was merrily spraying the desolate

2001



Retreat
22 key members of the
Allied Assault coders
escape and form
Infinity Ward.

2002



Victory
COD is released. The
collective gaming world
rolls over and begs IW
to scratch its tummy.

2003

Smoke 'em if you got 'em

Call Of Duty 2 takes the smoke grenades introduced in United
Offensive and takes them to another level. A better and higher level



A happy stroll through rural France is interrupted by a village that may be a base camp for German Forces.



THE troops charge, noting the nice shadow effects and explosions as mortar fire cascades around them.

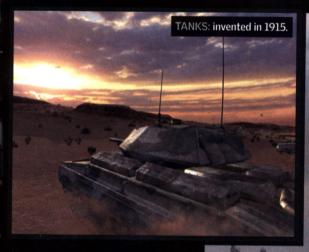


THE hamlet is heavily occupied, and cover is only afforded by a tiny wall that wouldn't hold in a flock of gerbils.



AH, one of *COD2's* handy smoke grenades. Smoke billows, cover is granted and chaos ensues.

JUST wait until you see it in motion.



block of flats I took cover behind, it was only when I nudged myself very slightly around a corner that I saw two Allies sprinting up to it, leaping on top, wrenching open its lid (*Will, tanks don't have lids – Ed*) and chucking a grenade in – the ensuing explosion killing one of the poor Ruskies as he ran away. Scripted yes, genius also.

BEHIND THE GRIME

It's not just this, though. The levels of COD2 that I played were permeated by wonderful little touches of profound texture that lie far deeper than its predecessor - women fighting for the Russian resistance, German commandants letting off feeble blasts with a pistol in their dying breaths, propaganda leeching out of Nazi loudspeakers. Most notably, though, in the earlier stages of the D-Day level, I noticed that a victim of one of my grenades was a little pudgy around the edges - fat even. Why was this Nazi overweight? Why did he have a beard? Because the year is 1944, and the Nazis experiencing heavy, heavy losses on the Eastern front – are conscripting anyone regardless of shape, experience or ability. As I crouched there, the reality of the situation danced across my thoughts -

asking myself exactly why an overweight and unwilling conscript was positioned so near the front-line, and thinking about the processes that had led this middle-aged butcher/baker/ candlestick maker from some unspecified small town in Germany to meet an undignified end in a muddy trench in Normandy. And then I stood up, was hit by mortar fire fired from a faraway place, and collapsed in a pile next to him. And that's pretty much why I

love Call Of Duty 2. PEZ



THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN...

As the nation becomes gripped by Golden Joystick mania, police ready water cannons

THE OSCARS. The Golden Globes. The Grammys. The Pulitzer Prize. The British Toilet Association's Loo of the Year Award. The Nobel Peace Prize. They're all pretty special, but let's face it - hardly the same accolade as receiving a Golden Joystick.

You see, Loo of the Year aside, they're all voted for by faceless, self-important idiots. The Golden Joysticks, however, are for the people, by the people, and other things to do with people. If they were a person they'd be the oiks standing in bus stations selling copies of Socialist Worker. Honest.

Born in 1982, it is now a long-standing tradition for plaudits to be handed out while a comedian of note harangues a room full of game-makers - last year Matt Lucas, this

year (if we take our corporate name-badge off for a second), someone we reckon is even better. Can't tell you who, mind.

> Anyway, as you can see there's two categories that we've flagged up for your immediate attention. PC Game of the Year and FHM Online Game of the Year. There are some gems in there, but also a few red herrings that would have us

committing hari-kari at our desks should anyone even think of sticking their paw in the air in favour of them. So do us proud. reader. The future lies in your hands.

Voting takes place via the futuristic technology that is the SMS, full details of which can be found on page 104 of this here magazine - or indeed at www.goldenjoystick. co.uk. Voting closes October 28, 2005.





PC GAME OF THE YEAR

Championship Manager 5 Doom 3: Resurrection Of Evil

Football Manager 2005 Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas

Half-Life 2

Rollercoaster Tycoon 3

Knights Of The Old Republic II:

The Sith Lords

The Lord Of The Rings: The Battle

For Middle-earth

The Sims 2: University

Warhammer 40,000: Dawn Of War

FHM.COM

Battlefield 2 City Of Heroes

EVE Online: Exodus

EverQuest II

Guild Wars

Phantasy Star Online: Blue Burst

Star Wars Galaxies: Episode III

Rage Of The Wookies Star Wars Galaxies: The

Total Experience

The Matrix Online

World Of Warcraft









Iris Closing?

Future of Stargate SG-1: Alliance starts looking a bit wobbly...



WE WERE ALL set to print an exclusive interview with Stargate actor Michael Shanks, aka science bod Daniel Jackson (massive gamer and D&D fan by the way), when the news came in that the stargate had stopped opening up onto strange Egyptianstyled lands, and was opening instead onto a world of shit. Or so it seemed.

You see, publisher JoWooD has publicly thrown its die-cast Stargate models out of its pram, claiming that it was pulling the plug on a title that would "satisfy neither our quality requirements nor the fans expectations". Aussie developer Perception, meanwhile, snapped back that the MGM licence was actually theirs (mate), and that JoWooD could whistle for it. As far as Perception is concerned, the game is fine and the libel

What this means for you, the gamer, has yet to become clear, although the massive confusion and sudden lack of publisher has certainly put Stargate's pre-Christmas release into question.



DESERVING WINNER

Nail-biting climax as Miss EverQuest II takes her throne

FOR THOSE LEFT on a knife-edge last issue, we can reveal that the winner of the EverQuest II Quest for Antonia beauty pageant was the one with the shiny teeth and the breasts. She was

very happy, and put on a sexy bikini to celebrate. And so the sun sets on another glorious chapter in videogame history. Roll on EverQuest III.



30 PCZONE

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PlayStation₈2











UPFRONTINEWS





Spooked Out X

New satellite intelligence of squad shooter Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter Www.ghostrecon3.com ETA: Q3

> A stunning recreation of Suzy Wallace's motor.

"HERE WE ENCOUNTER the first of the evil Mexicans," laughs senior producer of Ghost Recon 3 Mathieu Girard. Well, bad eggs pop up everywhere these days - so who knows what evil lurks below the rim of a particularly low-cut sombrero...

eponymous Advanced Warfighter, GR3 will give you access to weapons and equipment actually based on real and proposed military hardware, stuff that pretty much borders on science fiction, such as camera drones, satellite support and a lethal-looking Crye gun - an various attachments and special

FALLING DOWN

been generic multi-platform demonstrations, so we were eager to sit down in front of the world's first showing of the game, built with its own PC-exclusive engine. And what a showing it was. We were airlifted by a helicopter into the urban battle zone, landing next to a beautiful fountain replete with HDR lighting for 'bloom' effects, detailed textures and billowing smoke effects. Having rappelled to the ground, our three fellow 'ghosts' immediately sprang into action, the AI squad members looking for the nearest

cover and checking the area for hostiles.

As one unfortunate soldier was moving behind a palm tree, he was caught by enemy gunfire, and in an amazing few seconds, fell crumpled to the ground, picked himself up and combining both animation and ragdoll physics to give the soldiers very realistic movement." said Girard, "We're also enhancing the PC FPS controls for

advanced eight-way leaning, and other cool moves such as run and backslide,

JACKPOT HIT

The cross-com interface, that gives you the ability to see through the eyes of your team-mates, wasn't available in the demo, but we did have a gander at the handy tactical map. You can use it to plan your strategy for the missions, which range from rescuing the US

President to halting

convoys. Also impressive was the physics model, that allows you to blast open car doors to use as cover, deflate tyres and even shoot open parking meters, spilling dozens of individually modelled coins around the environment. Best of all, the usual online modes, Advanced Warfighter will include multiplayer co-op. Sweaty palms. Raised eyebrow.

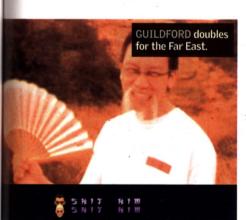


PULLING THE OTHER ONE

Hands-on with the increasingly bizarre *Raa Doll Kuna Fu*

THERE'S A MANTRA that says good games have to be described in one sentence. Well, that doesn't really work with Rag Doll Kung Fu. In fact, any game that has inter-level FMV footage of Lionhead staff hitting each other with sticks in woodland areas and dubbed over in what sounds like Chinese, would probably struggle in this area.

A first play reveals that RDKF is daft, lovable and really, really quite funny – the energy and enthusiasm that Lionhead artist Marcos Healey and his hamacting chums bring to it ooze out of its pastel pores. Absolute mouse control is the order of the day: whether throwing around your little chap's floppy body or moving each individual limb. When it comes down to fighting, everything is mouse-centred. Leftclicking moves limbs to pick things up, wander around and block; right-clicking moves limbs for fighting, and twirls of the mouse build up Chi power. And remember, it's all about Chi power.





NO, it's not Grant Mitchell.

The solo story mode is quite short, essentially a training mode for multiplayer, but it's packed to the gills with neat touches, hidden areas and videos of people pretending to be trolls or dressed up as ladies. Pulling your ragdoll's hands down to things will also let you pick stuff up and - should it be a 'special'. mushroom – eat it by dragging it to your mouth and munching. This will allow you to fly around in a rainbow swirl. Don't do drugs, kids.

With secret games to unlock, and the ability to import your own skins - as demonstrated by young Will in the screenshots - it's easy to see why Valve wants to distribute it on its Steam network. Although, after an initial play full of giggles and snorting, quite what RDKF's lasting appeal is, is an unknown quantity. A side-on, beat 'em up completely controlled by the mouse, especially one with special moves dictated by butterflies and putting your kung-fu fighter into the right pose, is hardly something you come across every day. And Will's in it as well, so it can't be bad.

The FBI is allegedly investigating alleged death threats made towards notorious game-hating lawyer, **Jack Thompson**. The wilful self-publicist has bored people almost to death with a series of ill-judged campaigns against a variety of games, from the more standard anti-GTA diatribe, all the way to a fully-fledged claim that *The Sims* provides a breeding ground for paedophilia. But it seems gamers may have finally fought back. Received via the electronic mail system, one such missive apparently read: "For being a total f**king asshole. I think video games or [sic] freaking awesome, and they are my entire life, and for you to insult them, is like telling me my life is totally worthless. For this, sir, I AM GOING TO F**KING KILL YOU!!!"

A further email alleged: "This is not spam, its [sic] my right as a citizen to send you thousands upon thousands of emails saying the same thing until you die painfully from gunshot wounds."

And yet another claimed: "Everyone thinks you are insane, hence the name 'Wacko Jacko', which makes you the equivalent of a molester. Therefore you are gay. I hate you, and the world would be a better place if you were brutally murdered."

All of the emails were forwarded by Thompson himself to a US gaming site, which then made clear to him its intentions to contact the FBI regarding the matter. Thompson hurriedly replied: "Are you crazy? People are threatening to kill me. Either report what I have said, having been provided with the emails, or stop bothering me," also claiming "The FBI is all over these.' An FBI spokesperson said: "No comment."

Yet another South Korean has gamed himself to death. The 28-year-old man, identified only by his family name, Lee, keeled over in an Internet cafe after playing "games like StarCraft" for a staggering 50 hours without sleep. He was taken to hospital where he died within three hours. A Taegu provincial police official said: "We presume the cause of death was heart failure stemming from exhaustion." Lee was believed to have been recently fired from his job due to his frequent absences brought on by game addiction. Apparently, he told his mum he would finish the game and then go home.

erefore you are





MILLERI



WHAT'S YOUR GAME?

Will Porter grills Scott Miller about the long-awaited alien invasion shooter Prey...

Who are ya?





NAME Scott Miller

DEVELOPER 3D Realms

POSITION CEO

AGE 44

GAMES WORKED ON Duke Nukem 3D, Descei Terminal Velocity, Max Payne series

FAVOURITE GAME Currently on level 60 in World Of Warcraft, but loves all the usual suspects - stuff from Blizzard, BioWare, Valve and Lionhead

I think that what will most surprise gamers about Prev is the complexity of background, emotion and narrative that's going into the script. Why is narrative so important to Prey?

Well, narrative is why we care. Would Max Payne have been nearly as entertaining without its story, leaving only the action parts? I really don't think so. The story is such a huge part of the equation because people inherently love a good story. Plus, the best stories affect people emotionally, so we've tried to create a story that does just that, with several emotional gut punches that we're not going to reveal before the game comes out.

Why did the original version of Prey never get a release?

Sometimes you just need to give up, and that's what we did. At the time we were trying to expand internally as a company and make three games, and it proved to be too much, so in 1999 we ended up dropping Prey and moving the best people to Duke Nukem Forever. Prev stayed in limbo until late 2001. when we connected with Take 2 and Human Head to revive the project.

There seems to be a lot of playing around with physics. gravity and perspective in what we've seen of Prey ...

Well, the setting of an alien spacecraft gives us a lot of license to develop ideas that don't make sense on Earth. Gravity flipping and Wall Walk - which allow you to run on the walls and ceiling - both fit well and were prototyped very early in the project, which allowed the level designers to utilise them as soon as possible. They're pretty much integral to the design because of the alien setting and since puzzles based around gravity flipping and wall-walking are unique and fun. A simple room can have a completely different set of challenges once we start flipping the player up onto the ceiling. For example, one type of puzzle involves a large chasm the player cannot get across - but you can simply flip gravity to the ceiling. navigate past the chasm (which is now above your head) and finally flip gravity back to normal. The game is filled with moments like that.

Have there been any 'Eureka!' moments in the development of

Prey, in which the whole team has been invigorated by the concoction of a new idea?

The best example of something that just clicked with design is Death Walk. In Prey, death is not permanent. You die and you're transported into an alternate plane of existence, where you must battle for the right to come back to the land of the living. When you succeed, you come back to exactly where you died, to continue the game right where you left off. The team was really excited about it - it's unique to a game like Prey, it fits into the storyline and it's just a great feature. Now that I'm used to Death Walk. I find myself wishing it was in many of the other games I've been playing lately.

Who's writing the script? We've read a copy of the earlier parts of the game and have to say that we're mightily impressed.

The script has been a long process for us and not a cheap one either! We've spent as much on this script as many Hollywood film scripts. The original story was created by myself and several developers at Human Head Studios. Next, we had a 35page treatment written by Chris Treagus, an expert in the horror genre. Then, David Freeman, best known for his Hollywood writing workshops, wrote the first draft

We've spent as much on this script as many Hollywood film scripts

of the script and Gary Whitta wrote the final draft. Gary used to be the editor of a PC games mag over in the US, and has recently had a script picked up for movie production. He's the writer for the Duke Nukem Forever script too.

What cues are you taking for the way the game sounds?

When we started research on music and sound, we realised just how different it was from other games from a design standpoint. We really didn't find anything firm to latch on to as a starting place. For Prey's sound design, we wanted to mirror the strong biotech angle brought forth by the level design. The Sphere is a living, growing, dynamic thing, and it should sound alive, wet and perhaps even a bit gross. The monsters are altogether alien, so the less they sound like Earth animals be they lions, seals, elephants or whatever - the better. The weapons are similarly unique and also carry the same strong biotech design element seen in the levels, so be prepared to hear something new when you fire these guns. Musically, you'll hear a mix of traditional Native American instrumentation and new age electronic soundscapes, with a dash of horror film scoring too.

Finally, could you give us one more reason why Prey is going to kick ass?

The game has the best opening level of any FPS game yet made. We've not shown this to anyone yet, but the game does *not* start in the bar room with the alien abduction. That's level two, which is a flashback level.

Cripes.





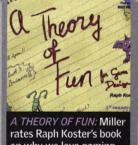




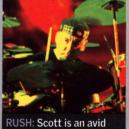
SCOTT MILLER

Where he turns for inspiration...





on why we love gaming as one of the best.

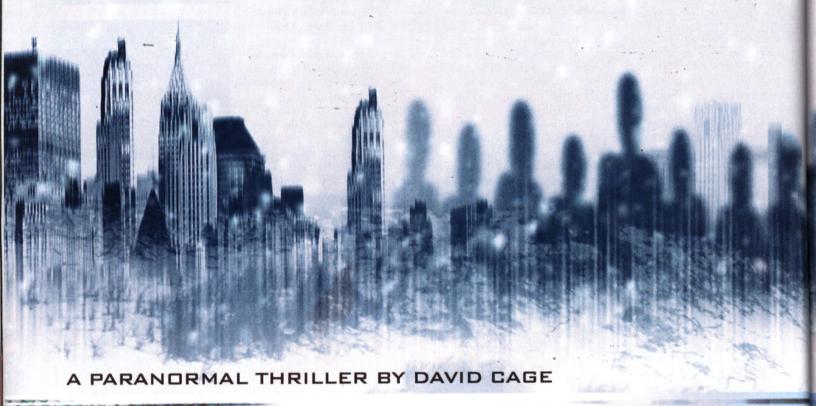


drummer, and loves the band Rush and their drummer Neil Peart.



STAR TREK: Kirk and Picard crop up in the book section of Scott's website www.gamematters.com

FAHRENG HEIT







90% "BUY IT, PLAY IT, ENJOY IT,
THEN DEMAND MORE."

PC ZONE

9/10 "EASILY A CONTENDER FOR GAME OF THE YEAR."

XBM

90% "A MASTERPIECE."

"FAHRENHEIT HAS AN ELEGANCE AND MATURITY THAT MOST GAMES ONLY DREAM OF."

EDG





PlayStation₂2





meerlosineup







AN EYE IN THE SKY WITH...

BLACK & WHITE 2

Never shy of the odd superiority complex, Paul Presley goes hands-on with the only game big enough to satisfy his ego...

DEVELOPER Lionhead PUBLISHER EA WEBSITE www.lionhead.com PREVIOUSLY IN... Issue 156

THE LOWDOWN

Beautiful 3D landscapes

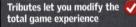


Lord it up over your friends and family



X

Pet AI is so advanced it's in the Guinness Book Of Records 2006



Sticks to the tried-andtested resource management game mechanics





'VE JUST THROWN Suzy Wallace from atop a cliff edge, watched placidly as her body bounces sickeningly off every jagged protrusion on the way down, heard her scream with terror as she plummets to the ground below and seen her land in an unnatural slump at the foot of the rocks, dead. Then for good measure, I've chucked her lifeless body on top of a burning altar and looked around for the barbecue sauce. I'm an evil god and she displeased me with her lack of humility.

Alternatively, in another saved game time stream, I set her to work in my forests, then rewarded her efforts with a lovely home to rest within, a thriving community to mix with and a sturdy army and solid wall to protect her. Then I fed her to my giant monkey pet. I don't do good.

Yes, Black & White 2 is almost here and we've been given the right to play god (for a while) by the moral arbiters at Lionhead. We've also been given the chance to star in

the game, along with just about every other member of the gaming press (as well as the names in your Outlook Express address book). So yes, now you too can make Will Porter a sex-crazed breeding machine, or put Jamie Sefton to work in his natural home down t'pits.

COMING OF AGE

Following the (at this stage) unskippable tutorial sections - covering basics such as camera control, peasant interaction, rock throwing and pet abuse - and several lifetimes worth of "oohing" and "ahhing" at the prettiness of the graphics (lovely







1987



lys on in charge, but

1995









Who's the daddy?

I swear, I didn't touch her



Personal quests pop up from time to time on each map, one of the more bizarre being a paternity suit slapped on you by an irate father after his up-the-duff daughter claims an immaculate conception. Ideally, you'd do a quick spot of godly snooping and uncover the real oat-sower, grass him up to the dad and sit back in your godly chair, with a smug godly grin across your godly face. Me? I fed her to my monkey to punish her. Then threw the father into the sea for being a neglectful parent. Then I threw rocks at the rest of the village, just to be safe. Seemed the right thing to do at the time.

Then for good measure, I chucked her lifeless body on top of a burning altar and looked around for the barbecue sauce



water effects) - it was our first real taste of game action and... Well, er, it's a bit Age Of Empires really.

I mean, good and all. Lovely to look at and oozing clever little touches, but still sticking to the villager-exploiting, resource-gathering template set up so many years ago.

GRID GONE

Still, being Lionhead, Black & White 2 is all about those touches. So you can build things just by picking up a tree and squeezing the wood out of it yourself. Or train your pet to entertain the masses (or devour them, or shit on them, or sit around being bored at them). Or, as we found out in the early map open to us, build walls around your villages in non-grid based patterns! Yes, for years we've wished construction games would ditch their dependency on keeping everything rectilinear fashion and finally we've got it.

During our brief sojourn around the new Black & White world, there were also glimpses of the combat engine, with various set-pieces like rolling flaming barrels of hay on to approaching warriors. There were also Rome: Total War-style troop movements and setups (albeit on a slightly smaller scale), all giving the impression that fans of mass slaughter are well catered for.

REMEMBER to always extinguish

campfires and acts of god.

We only had access to a small amount of the total game, and the whole thing is still being tweaked and polished and, well, considering the various bugs we encountered, fixed. So hopefully your hand-of-god mouse pointer will be that little bit more responsive, the villagers won't all be sharing the same dozen or so names and that tutorial sequence will have a skip function. Oh, and it'll be the best god game ever. That'd be good too. PCZ



UPFRONTNEWS

HARTS ChartTrack **BATTLEFIELD 2**

- **FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005**
- THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY
- HALF-LIFE 2
- THE SIMS 2
- **GUILD WARS**
- **WORLD OF WARCRAFT**
- LOTR: BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH
- **CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 5**
- **ROME: TOTAL WAR**
- **GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS**
- **WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR**
- **BRIAN LARA INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2005**
- **ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3: SOAKED!**
- 15 (RE) EMPIRE EARTH II
- COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS DELUXE
- PIPPA FUNNELL: THE STUD FARM INHERITANCE
- 18 (RE) MS FLIGHT SIM 2004: CENTURY OF FLIGHT
- 19 (RE) THE SIMS: COMPLETE COLLECTION
- **ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3**



BATTLEFIELD 2

Still selling, so imagine how many noobs are still climbing into helicopters, taking off, losing control and crashing into the helipad. Lots



BRIAN LARA CRICKET

Now that England aren't quite as bad at cricket as usual, there's someone at Codemasters rubbing his face with money and giggling.



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005

Football is back. David James is still cack-handed. Football Manager remains firmly at the centre of our verge-of-relegation attention



PIPPA FUNNELL: SFI

Answers the pressing question of what you would do if you actually inherited a stud farm. No Glue Factory option, sadly.



We dust off the blood-stained yellow trousers for the latest *Suffering: Ties That Bind* code

WHAT WE LIKED most about The Suffering was its clever set-pieces and brutal grit - the action itself was passable, if a little console biased. Now we've had a play we can reveal that not all that much seems to have changed - at least in terms of the way the game plays and handles.

Scene-stealing ethereal scientist Killjoy (probably the best villain in any game from the



past few years) is still there, cackling in the background – appearing on abandoned television sets and cinema screens, and reciting his favourite and bloodiest bits from the works of Shakespeare. Torque's wife is still there too, tut-tutting disapprovingly should you accidentally kill a homeless junkie or two, while new boy Michael Clarke Duncan (he of Daredevil and The Green Mile fame) plays the devil on your shoulder - imploring you to slay demon and pedestrian alike. Seeing as, having turned into Torque's spiny alter-ego, we accidentally impaled a nearby traffic cop while taking on a monster the size of an angry bus, it was the latter who came away happiest with our performance.

Ties That Bind is no revolution – it's more of the same with bells and evil whistles - but it's looking like it'll satisfy fans of the original. There are some

superbly designed new monsters lurking around in there, including an excellent variant on the Doom Arch-Vile that hurls fire all around the place. Also, if it's at all possible, there seems to be even more swearing on the streets of Baltimore than in Torque's prison spree of last year, although having been there ourselves we can more than sympathise.

OOO,

KILLJOY - the best mad scientist for years.

TTLE GAMERS www.little-gamers.com



EASTERN PLEASUR

Codies announces UK rights for Phantasy Sta... No sorry, RF Online

www.codemasters.co.uk/rfonline | ETA: Q1 2006





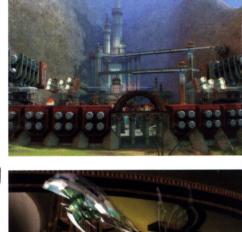
EVERY MMOG AND its ddog seems to have a million or so eastern subscribers these days, and if a population the size of Essex pretending to be space elves isn't a sign of oncoming apocalypse, what is? Then again, who doesn't like space elves?

RF Online, proper name Rising Force Online, is a ferociously popular MMOG in the Far East, boasting huge PvP battles and

crisp graphics that are certainly reminiscent of Sega's much vaunted and Mag-filled Phantasy Star Online. Three warring factions scrap on a regular (nay constant) basis - blending sci-fi and fantasy (or fant-fi as we like to call it) by throwing Mech battle units, robots and the aforementioned space elves into the mix. There's more than a little bit of Planetside in here as well, when winning factions on the massive battlefields gain control of a rich, resource-filled mine to boost their

After the disaster that was the now slain Dragon Empires project, Codemasters could do with a bit of luck online. Space elves could be the way forward.









Because charity begins at home. Or, failing that, on eBay

You wouldn't believe the crap that piles up on our desk, and until recently all that would happen to game-tagged merchandise was a one-off visit to the great waste tip in the sky. Now though, we've turned a leaf. And we flog it. All for charity, mind - the **Entertainment Software Charity no** less. We're like those charity muggers who stop you on the street, although we're not soulless dead-eyed wankers. And so with the eBay tag "pczoners' as soon as every new issue hits the shelves, we'll be awaiting your bids...

Buy our tat at www.ebay.co.uk All proceeds go to charity, mate... www.entertainment softwarecharity.org

THIS MONTH'S TAT



LENTICULAR LOGO The first test print. History in your hands.



KULT HERETIC KINGDOMS T-SHIRT In large and black style. For the deranged.

KING KONG NOTEPAD Official and quite snazzy notepad for unfinished monkey business

THE TAT BOARD

COMPARE	ITEM TITLE	SOLD FOR	BIDS	
	DAWN OF WAR LEATHER SATCHEL A new material world record for a Dawn Of War bag made out of dead cow. Smells like a posh house.	£43.51	14	
	BLITZKRIEG ZIPPO LIGHTER Whoever bought this must love smoking very much. Or perhaps just likes fire.	£16.00	6	
A. S.	STOLEN MAGIC LIGHT-UP PEN Ten notes for a pen commemorating such an abhorrent pile of shit? We're in the wrong business	£10.00	12	
	CITY OF HEROES POSTER The coolest tat so far is a snip – going for less than a tenner. When	£9.05	5	

the City Of Villains one comes in

we're keeping it...

UPFRONTHOTSHOTS IIIIII

HOT SHOTS SECOND SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SECOND SE

DEVELOPER Egosoft **PUBLISHER** Deep Silver **WEBSITE** www.x3reunion.com **ETA** Spring 2006

HERE'S ALL THE colour gone? Yes, Egosoft has crossed the final realism frontier with the upcoming X3: Reunion space sim and dropped the psychedelic rainbow palette for its spacial backdrops. No more purples and pinks, no more greens and yellow polka dots. Space is black, with just the odd gaseous nebula here and there to add a dash of colour. Also adding colour is the top-notch quality of the ingame voice-acting, supplied by William 'Lt Gorman in Aliens' Hope and our very own Paul 'not in Aliens' Presley. You can hear field recordings from both of these fine actors' sessions on this month's cover-disc, a masterclass in enunciation, if you will. Or in Prezzer's case, hamming it up big-time...



UPFRONTNEWS



Dear Will,

Enough zombies! These creeping corpses have run their (slow-paced) course. It's simply lazy design work on the part of these so-called developers, an excuse not to bother creating enemies with a bit of flair, a bit of thought and a bit of the old 'intelligence aritificiel'. Zombies in games should be shot in the head.

Prezzer

Dear Prez.

Technology is now at a stage where we can get hundreds of enemies on screen at any time, so now is the perfect time for zombies. Developers who use them aren't lazy, they're just trying to tap into all the reasons that zombie movies are great. I admit that they sometimes don't fit, I've never liked them in the *Thief* games for instance, but what exactly are you proposing that we replace them with? Will Porter

Dear Will,

Ooh, I don't know. Maybe adversaries that show a modicum of adaptive thought, present a modicum of strategic challenge or have enough brainpower to understand the word modicum? Zombies are fine, in their place. And that place is exactly three titles PER YEAR. No more, no less. And each of those with the word 'ZOMBIE' written on it in big, clear letters so people can shun them. PP

Dear Prez,

Well maybe the fact that zombie games ARE developing in exactly the ways you want will shut you up. In *Half-Life 2*, mindless shamblers are accompanied by leaping, cavorting, environment-pouncing terror zombies. *City Of The Dead* will contain all manner of running, jumping, gnawing and gnashing. *Stubbs The Zombie*, meanwhile, is going to cast you as the menace with no weapons whatsoever bar your undead abilities. Zombie games are evolving, and you have no leg to stand on. WP

Dear Will,

Jumping and eating are not intelligent uses of AI. I can jump and I'm as brain-addled as a tramp's fart. And you missed my point: I don't doubt that zombies can shuffle towards you in different ways, I just wish they weren't doing it in EVERY GAME ON THE MARKET. I swear I saw a zombie in *Tetris* the other day. PP

Dear Prez

There are definitely no zombies in *Tetris*. Your argument is therefore defunct and I win. WP

Dear Will,

No. No, you haven't. You only think you have. PP



GOODBYE CRUEL WORLD

Football Manager 2006 looms, divorce beckons

www.sigames.com | ETA: November 4, 2005

THE PAVEMENTS ARE strewn with leaves, the horse chestnut is heavy with conker and the word 'autumnal' is bandied about with depressing regularity. It's at this time of year that a man's thoughts turn to one thing: suicide. Failing that, there's always trusty *Football Manager* to see you through the winter months and deflect from the failings of your real club/real life* (*delete as applicable).

Last year's name change went as smoothly as could have been hoped, and with Sports Interactive's opus now firmly established as the definitive football management game, this year is about streamlining the experience and ramping up the features, with more than 30 new elements promised.

Key among these is the ability to change tactics on-the-fly, the virtual equivalent of barking instructions from the touchline. Closer interaction is provided by the team talks, at both half-time and full-time, which, dependent on character, can affect a player's performance and morale.

Elsewhere, there are improvements to the match engine realism – thanks to the input of

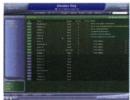
potato-headed ex-pro, Liverpool and Ireland legend Ray Houghton – and a slew of new commentary lines. Referees are also coming under the spotlight this year, with league tables of red and yellow cards given, enabling you to alter your gameplan accordingly.

We've been playing the beta version and have already been sucked in, with the interface making it easier to get around and the added functions increasing the depth of the experience. Now go away, we've got a crucial LDV Trophy tie to contest...









Death to Sudoku

Perplex City causes both headscratching and post-modern musing

NO, IT ISN'T a computer game. It's an ARG. Monty Python references aside, ('What is that?' 'Well, maybe he died while carving it.' 'Do you think he could have meant Camarque?' 'Where's that?' 'France, I think'), an ARG is an Alternate Reality Game. A game which uses the Internet, the media, phone messages and the very workings of your soul in its bizarre cleverness.

You buy packs of puzzles, get them right and watch your world ranking rise and fall in pursuit of a £100,000 global prize - while the clever stuff starts with hints and tips on the cards that lead you into the story of the theft of the Receda cube from the

people of Perplex City. In turn, websites appear and disappear to fill in back-story - the more obvious of the 12 currently publicly acknowledged being ones like www.perplexcitysentinel. com or www.whipsmartice.com.

It's intensely clever stuff, made all the more engaging seeing as the puzzles are way, way beyond your average Metro puzzle page. All manner of optical illusions, general knowledge, cryptic know-how and tongue-biting mechanisms are used - the only drawback being that a pack of six will set you back £2.50.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

The guy who designs the forests

NOAH BERRY - environments artist on The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion

Back in 1996, Noah was floored by the beauty and texture of *The Elder* Scrolls: Daggerfall - something that led him to the doors of Bethesda after graduating with a degree in Fine Arts. As an environmental artist on both Morrowind - and now Oblivion - it's his job to make the land of Cyrodiil as real as technology will allow.



So what are you up to at the moment?

These days, towards the end of Oblivion's development, I'm spending the bulk of my time trying to finesse and optimise any and all environment artwork I've created before we begin to freeze game assets. Cyrodiil's landscape is a vast swath of land and it's no small task making sure that every bit of it is lush, dense and as polished as it can be. I use any remaining time I may have in the evenings to try and lovingly squeeze in last-minute detail art and polish. These small additions (anything from a colour variation to small ambient wildlife) can be quite rewarding to implement, as they add much more life and richness to gameplay spaces.

Did you go on trips to local woodland before you started designing the trees and forests?

Real-world excursions are integral, at least in the initial stages, to designing

and building landscapes for a game like Oblivion – so there are several local parks and forests that our art staff have visited to digitally photograph flora and fauna for use in the game. Most of my own forest and landscape research comes from a large reference library I've been compiling, which contains hundreds of photographs of visually striking realworld locations and settings. These always serve as great artistic



inspiration and as an invaluable reference when building landscape art.

How do you go about designing Oblivion's flora? Do you use realworld tree species, or do you 'invent' new fantasy varieties?

It was intended from the beginning that Oblivion's landscape would have a more tangible and realistic flair, especially when contrasted with more exotic Tamriel/ Morrowind locations such as Vvardenfell or Black Marsh. So naturally, we rely heavily upon real-world species and varieties of vegetation. This said, many of the plants and trees we've created are fantastically exaggerated for the sake of atmospheric and other-worldly effect, plus there are many unique lore-specific trees and plants only found in Cyrodiil. The *Oblivion* planes are a different matter altogether however...

WE can't work it out, but we like it.

So how much of what you do hits the editing suite floor?

Since our game worlds are generally so vast and require so many things to occupy them, usually very little - in terms of raw assets – gets cut from the final game. We try to create and hone as much art and content as we can before time runs out. That said, more is not always better and we do keep watchful eyes on which aspects are perhaps hindering the final gameplay experience. Occasionally, ideas or art will get abandoned due to technical or time constraints, but not to worry, as the mantra commonly heard around here says: "Next game!"

Finally, what's your favourite sort of tree?

I'm quite partial to evergreens and old-growth forests with towering cathedral ceilings. I find the distant canopy, spacious and subdued reverb and sunlit-dappled fern understory very aesthetically pleasing. I'm by no means a tree-hugger or an overly dramatic and extreme conservationist; I just find forests very pleasant to the senses and soothing to the soul. They're still'creepy at night though.



THE MOVIES

Fresh from the ZONE casting couch, Jamie Sefton is ready for action...

DEVELOPER Lionhead **PUBLISHER** Activision **WEBSITE** www.lionhead.com/themovies/ **PREVIOUSLY IN...** Issue 156

Three games in one: tycoon management, a movie-maker and *The Sims*Superb, slick presentation with great

THE LOWDOWN

presentation with great movie genre pastiches

Super-friendly, mousedriven interface

Create your own movie – write scripts, cast, shoot and even add your voice

Could be daunting. Is there almost too much on offer?



"VE JUST WATCHED my first PC ZONE Studios movie. It's rubbish. A 1920s black-and-white grainy affair entitled Hepcat Revolution, with one strange-looking actress cavorting on screen for 30 seconds while a manic piano tinkles in the background. Honestly, even Michael Winner could do better.

This is *The Movies*, and it could be the best thing since bread was arranged into thin, easily-ingested portions. A mix of tycoon game, life sim and moviemaking tool, Peter Molyneux's Lionhead Studios (also about to release *Black & White 2* and *Fable: The Lost Chapters*) may just have another hugely original, ground-breaking hit on its hands.

DREAM FACTORY

Beginning at the dawn of the film industry, you have to guide your studio to the heights of success by making the biggest movies, gathering the largest roster of stars and collecting the most stuffed cabinet of meaningless-but-craved-for awards. Playing *The Movies* is a joy – everything you need to know is on-screen, and tasks, such as hiring an actor for example, are done via the mouse, picking them up by the scruff of the neck and dropping them in the 'Create Actor' room of your studio facility. If you're stuck what to do next, click on an actor, director, crew or staff member, and a *Donnie Darko*-style sparkly stream will show visually where to move them to trigger an action.

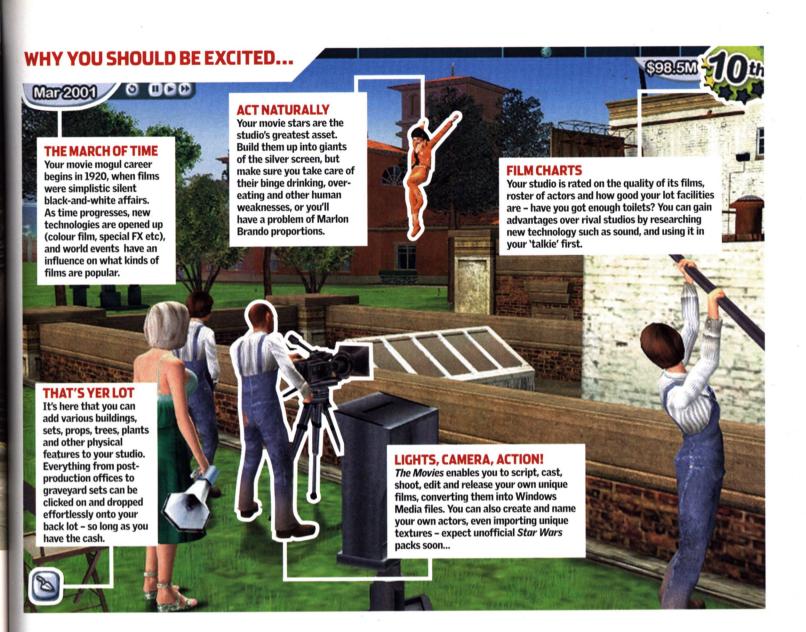
The tycoon part of the game has you building stage-schools, casting offices and sets, planting trees and flowers as well as sorting out facilities such as greasy burger vans and post-production. The Sims part enables you to make your actors better-looking by giving them liposuction or plastic surgery, sorting out their considerable mental problems and even creating your own unique lookeelikee actors using the StarMaker tool. Finally, the movie-maker element gives

you the freedom to script, cast, shoot, edit and release your own mini-movies, even allowing you to record your own voices, then convert them to WMV files to share with other film buffs.

SPECIAL FX

Essential to success is research – as the timeline progresses, you can look into new technology to give your studio a crucial advantage over competitors, such as the development of sound or the introduction of colour film. *The Movies* also follows certain world events: for example, in 1938 you'll hear about a German bloke with a dodgy 'tash invading Poland, meaning a glut of war films.

Even at this preview stage, *The Movies* is a polished product, with a friendly mouse-driven interface, fantastic British sense of humour and a real depth of gameplay. Grab your popcorn and settle in for the full review next month, along with a demo of the StarMaker tool on next issue's cover discs. Cut!







THE studio system in all its glory – impressive sets, romance, action and stars' eating disorders.

This is a polished product, with a fantastic British sense of humour and real depth of gameplay







ZATION

Steve Hill returns to Baltimore to take on the Americans in a multiplayer session of Civ IV. Somebody had to...

DEVELOPER Firaxis PUBLISHER 2K Games WEBSITE www.firaxis.com PREVIOUSLY IN... Issue 155

THE LOWDOWN

The return of Sid Meier's epoch-spanning epic

Multiplayer facilitates simultaneous turns

Workers can be automated 🕢

The AI has been developed to 'cheat' less

to maintain cities

8 Looks a bit old school



HAM!" YELLS THE man in the floral shirt to my left. If it were a pub quiz and he'd been asked to name the worst band of the '80s, he'd be well within his rights. Sadly, it's not. It's a Civilization IV hands-on multiplayer event in (genuinely) sunny Baltimore, and shirt-boy is celebrating another minor victory, while increasingly getting on my wick.

It could have been worse. Ten hours earlier, myself and a UK PR man were stumbling round a car park at midnight in the smack capital of the Eastern seaboard, searching desperately for entertainment having jettisoned ourselves from a meal that had degenerated into an in-depth discussion on the intricacies of Morrowind.

My fellow diners are now gathered round a table at the Firaxis office, mainly sporting the regulation uniform of polo shirts tucked into slacks, offset with greasy hair and white

socks. I couldn't be any deeper in geek hell if Captain Spock were overseeing proceedings.

UK DECOY

"So has everyone played Civ before?" asks a Firaxis beard, to audible snorts of contempt from the assembled nerderati. Accordingly, I decide not to mention that my entire Civ career consists of unsuccessfully attempting the tutorial of Civ III. Besides, I'm already unpopular enough as it is, being a) the only Brit, b) half an hour late, and c) unable to speak binary.

With this limited background, I install myself as a very outside chance in the multiplayer game that's just got underway. I am China and I am clueless. Faking it like a pro, I studiously survey the map in front of me. Clicking randomly on a few things, I remarkably manage to build the city of

defending it with a clutch of archers.

Beijing, rapidly putting

a wall round it and

Getting a taste for exploration, I put together some scouts and send them out into the wild, whereby they promptly kill a lion. My warriors are less successful, straying into shirt-boy territory and impetuously declaring war. As the screen zooms into a 3D battle, shirt-boy screams "Take that, caveman!" as his mounted troops vanguish my boys.

Taking it personally, I throw my best men at him, but he again comes out on top, howling: "Take that War Chariot! Think you're all cool and stuff."

During the ensuing battles, he utters the improbable line: "I just rolled over an archer

1996





my of Interactive

after the original

2001

1996

Environmentally Friendly

One of the keys to building a successful civilisation is to utilise the nearby natural resources...



ANIMAL husbandry is a key skill to research, allowing you to use cows for food and horses for troops to ride.



RETAINING forests and jungle increases your people's happiness and gives your troops an added bonus.



NATER is a health resource, while pollution is a more ingrained problem that requires long-term solutions.



BUILDING a city by the sea uses sailing skills, enabling you to use boats for trading.



unit and it felt good," followed by a near-

feral, "Bring it! Bring it! Bring it!" Calm down dear, it's a turn-based strategy game.

Thankfully, the game is soon halted due to time constraints. Remarkably, I haven't completely disgraced myself, finishing in a creditable mid-table position, with such achievements as researching fishing and animal husbandry, becoming a Buddhist, and, crucially, keeping shirt-boy out of my city. "Your horses were stomping round my rice paddies," he wistfully announces, to no-one in particular.

SAVING PRIVATE RYAN

Next up is a 2v2 team game, and with the yanks rapidly pairing up, I'm left to join forces with a pasty teenager by the name of Ryan Meier, son of Sid and regular in the Firaxis QA department. Something of a result, his Germans and my Americans rapidly set about populating the East of the

"Bring it! Bring it! Bring it!" he utters. Calm down dear, it's a turn-based strategy game...



map, with Washington, New York and Boston sitting incongruously alongside the likes of Munich and Berlin, with trade routes established by road.

Taking a peaceful approach, we build our empire rapidly, with Ryan attempting to 'turn' rival cities by dropping a so-called culture bomb in their immediate vicinity. I, meanwhile, keep myself busy by building a couple of aqueducts and killing the odd wolf in near total silence. As the nearby PR man texts me: "Not

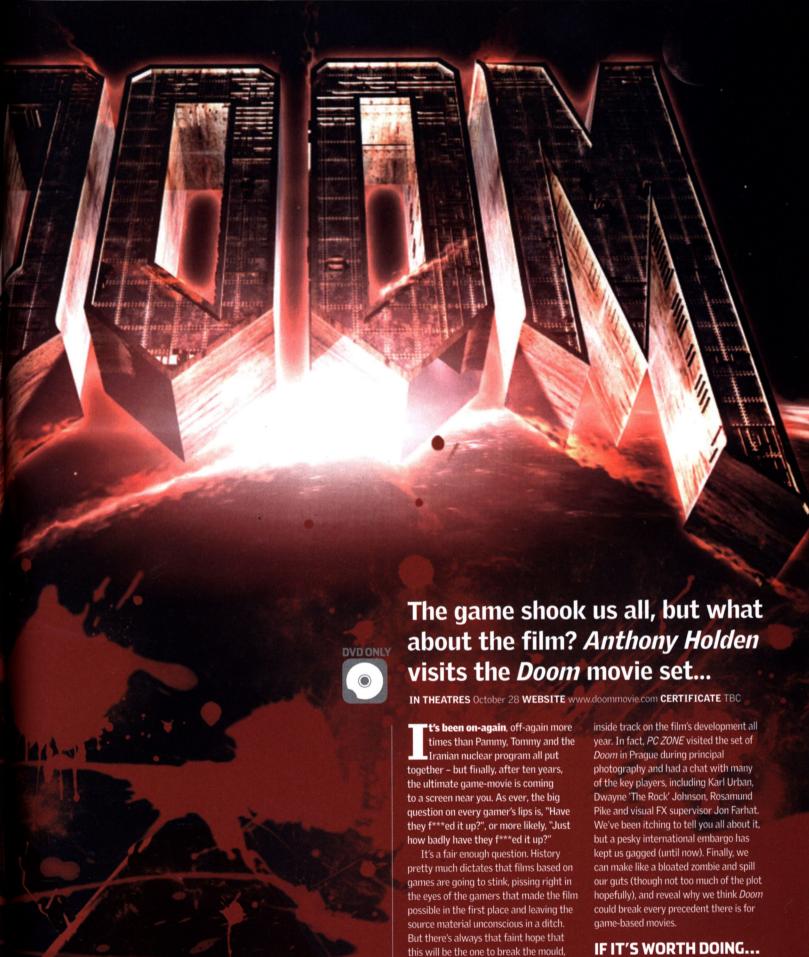
much whoopin' and a'hollerin' coming from you Stevie boy."

This carries on for some hours, with Ryan resolutely refusing to go to war while I amass an unused army. It's a ploy that backfires, as with my low score counteracting his high score, we're behind on points with eight turns left. Going all-in, we finally attack, but it's too late and we go down to a points defeat. At this stage, I could scarcely be less popular if laid a fresh turd on the carpet. Taxi for Hill! PEZ



exclusive special wonder.





the one that finally does justice to our memories, hopes and dreams. If you've

seen the Doom trailer, that crack of hope will have opened just a little, because it

looks – not too loud now – pretty good.

To be honest though, we've been expecting this, as we've had a bit of an IF IT'S WORTH DOING...

Admittedly, we haven't seen the finished product yet, so we could be horribly wrong here. But what we can assert with confidence is that everyone involved went into the project with the right frame of mind and the right level of respect for the wants of the fans.



What I love about the film is that it's very unapologetic... And I get to play the baddest motherf***er around

Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson on his character in Doom

The script, for a start, went through at least seven major revisions before filming got under way, starting with an ultragritty first draft by first-timer David Callaham, then through the hands of producer John Wells and eventually to Wesley Strick, a big-time Hollywood script doctor who came aboard to polish the dialogue. At every step, id Software had broad approval.

"The story is very similar," says id's Todd Hollenshead, "It isn't based exactly on the Doom 3 story, but there are a lot of similarities between who the good guys are, who the bad guys are and how that all works out." Suffice it to say, the plot will be instantly recognisable, despite a few inevitable tweaks for the sake of storytelling.

MARS ATTACKS

The action takes place at a scientific research base on Mars, where a meddling scientist (called Dr Carmack, ho ho) has unwittingly opened a wormhole to 'somewhere bad'. It's not necessarily the gates of hell, but it may as well be, as the accident has unleashed a legion of imps and demons into the facility. To make matters worse, people are turning into hideous zombie mutants left and right, and nobody knows why. Answering a distress call from the stricken base, an elite Rapid Response Tactical Squad is sent in to seal off the facility and kill whatever they find inside - unless it eats them first.

Apart from the games, the inspiration here is clearly Aliens, as well as a little bit of Predator (no bad thing either way). The squad of space marines even have nicknames that could be from either

of those films - Duke, Goat, Destroyer, not to forget John 'Reaper' Grimm, better known to you and me as DoomGuy.

LEADING MAN

One of the big questions throughout the development of Doom was: who would play DoomGuy? Names such as Arnie and Vin Diesel were tossed around early on, but when the project was finally green-lit it looked like the part would fall to The Rock, former People's Champion now turned serious actor. As it turns out, the brawny grappler preferred the 'Sarge' role, leaving the door open for a personable Kiwi called Karl Urban. Best known for his taciturn performance as Eomer in The Lord Of The Rings trilogy, he's also played villains in Riddick and The Bourne Supremacy, but cites Doom as the most challenging, exhausting film he's ever done. Luckily for us, he also understands the gravity of his position.

"I've got to admit I had concerns," admits the star in his thick Kiwi twang. "I was a massive, massive game fan in my college years, and I thought, I don't want to be involved with something if they're not going to do it justice. But after looking at the script and seeing the attention to character. I was convinced. Because you can't just hang this off corridors and killing zombies - there has to be more to it than that. If you don't have the story and the characters right, people are going to get bored pretty quickly. There have been examples of videogame films in the recent past that haven't got that right; we're aware of that, and we're doing everything to inject as much three-dimensionality into these characters as we can."

Urban describes John Grimm as a "thinking man's soldier". He's good at his job and gets the job done with ruthless efficiency, but is a little more introspective and cerebral than your average grunt. "I'm hoping he's going to appeal to the gamers who are not these guys who are built like brick shithouses," says Urban. "They're normal guys like you and me."

One of the other great things about the script is that it doesn't attempt to crowbar a romantic subplot into what is, essentially, a bloody and violent horror film. Perhaps to provide an equivalent emotional journey, John Grimm instead must come to terms with his estranged sister Sam - one of the scientists trapped on the base, played by former Bond-girl Rosamund Pike. The two haven't seen each other since their parents died in a scientific accident, after which John abandoned his budding scientific career and joined the space marines. When the Martian mission comes up, he volunteers to go back and, er, face his demons.

LA-DI-DA...

"Sam's the impostor, because she's not in the game," says Rosamund Pike, perhaps the poshest person ever to be associated with the name Doom. "She's the brains of the piece really. She's the insider, the person who has access to the computer files and the scientific knowledge to work out what's going on. People are turning into these creatures, but she's the one who works out why not

> "DAMMIT, wrestling is real I tell you!"

UPFRONTFEATURE

Ultimate Doom

Film sequel already on the agenda



everybody turns, and that's quite a crucial thing to the story."

For Pike, Samantha Grimm is a vital addition to the formula, balancing the overriding masculinity of the film and injecting the space marines with a bit of humanity. "She despises them and what they stand for at the beginning, but it's quite interesting how things work out."

AS BAD AS THEY WANNA BE

Another key decision made early on was to consciously go for an R-18 rating. Trying to reach a wider audience by pulling back to a PG-13 was one of the many things that ruined Aliens Vs Predator, here, luckily, the producers realised that without the right level of gibs and ultraviolence, it just wouldn't be Doom.

For Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson, this was practically a prerequisite to his involvement. "What I love about this film is it's very unapologetic," enthuses the big man. "We pull no punches - it's rated R-plus! When I first spoke to Andrzej (Bartowiak, the director), he asked me what's important. And I said it's important to me to deliver on the sci-fi front, on the videogame enthusiast front and on the horror front. All these genres are very, very loyal. And I said with an R-rating we have the ability to really scare the shit out of people, and I think we should. And he goes 'Well we're not going to do that.' There was this long pause, and I'm thinking, shit... Then he says: 'We're going to f***ing terrify them!' That was cool to hear."

The Rock plays the character of Sarge, loosely based on Master Sergeant Kelly

from *Doom 3*. In preparing for the role, Rock sought out some classic asshole commanders from the Hollywood backcatalogue, especially Full Metal Jacket for Lee Ermey and The Rock (funnily enough) for Ed Harrison.

"It's great," says Johnson. "I get to play what I call the BMFOP - the baddest motherf***er on the planet. I'm excited about that. He's not a bad guy as such; he's just a guy who's extremely dedicated to the Marine Corps. He believes in seeing through the orders at all costs, and if he has to kill everybody, then that's what he has to do. I admire Sarge for that."

The Rock describes the experience of making the film as like reliving a childhood dream, playing soldiers and toting around ridiculous amounts of firepower. "At one time I've got a BFG,

SOMEONE'S not been flossing.

The FPS section is there for the fans. We're hoping the audience will see it and say 'Yeah, THIS is Doom!"
Jon Farhat visual FX supervisor, Doom



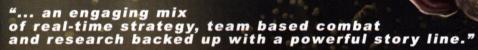


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Available from October 2005



Scaremongering

SO IT'S A spook-themed issue, is it? All bumps in the night, sinister shadows and psychological horror that will leave you blubbing in the corner for a week like the big girl you are. Unless you already are a girl in which case you're blubbing like a little boy. Hooray for equality.

So what better way to join in the creepy fun than... sports games! Huh? Well, I guess sport can be scary sometimes (try being on the receiving end of a Roy Keane tackle). It seems EA Sports decided this would be a good month to release no less than three of the 2006 versions of its long-running franchises - FIFA, Madden and NHL.

But if it's true fear you're after, well there's our exclusive F.E.A.R. review. I suppose. Join us as young Willard Porter waxes poetic about scary girls, pyrotacular firefights (feel free to spread that word around) and all manner of gore, guts and gruesome dismemberment...

This month also sees a personal favourite reach the end of its line. The Myst series has been captivating audiences since time immemorial, and this fifth outing (not counting URU) is the final ever chapter (probably). Do yourself a favour, don't skip past it in search of more visceral thrills. You're missing a treat.

Must

PC ZONE Classics are rare beasts, indeed. These are our personal top tips for sheer gaming excellence...



PCZONE

HIS

Scaring up the best and worst in PC gaming



The PC ZONE Awards



CLASSIC (90%+)

RECOMMENDED (75-89%)

Pretty, pretty, pretty. Any game that turns ZONE's head is worthy of your love.



DUMP (0-19%)

Don't shirk your duty - it's the only responsible thing to do to a game like this.

you're lucky enough to see one, stop and buy it. **AND THE REST**

The best games ever. If



ONLINE ONLY Don't have an Internet connection? Then you're wasting your time. Move along please.

EXPANSION PACK going to have to own

the original to play the expansion. We know - life's not fair.

ON THE DISCS Good news! Check out the

cover discs for a playable demo.

ALSO REVIEWED

64 FIFA 06

66 TOTAL OVERDOSE

68 ROME: TOTAL WAR -BARBARIAN INVASION

PILOT DOWN: BEHIND ENEMY LINES

70 MYST V: END OF AGES

72 MADDEN NFL 2006

74 SNIPER ELITE

75 NHL 06

76 HEROES OF THE PACIFIC

ENIGMA: RISING TIDE

78 CONFLICT: GLOBAL STORM

82 FABLE: THE LOST CHAPTERS

INDIE ZONE

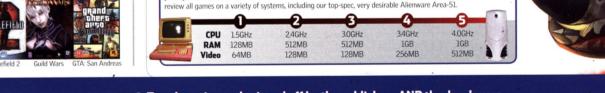
What's happening on the independent development scene? We can tell you!

86 BUDGET

Myst IV: Revelation, Pacific Fighters, CSI: Dark Motives, Alexander and more

The PC Class System

Not all games are created equal, so how do you know if your PC's up to the job? Using real science we've graded Not all garges are greated equal, so Individual review to see if your Post will play the game. We your system from 1-5. Match it with the icon on each individual review to see if your PC will play the game. We review all games on a variety of systems, including our top-spec, very desirable Alienware Area-51.





- To only review code signed off by the publishers AND the developers
- To give you our honest opinion. We're gamers. We love games. And we hate bad ones. Just like you
- To tell you if a company refuses to send a game to us before it's on sale. There's always a reason
- To hang up on companies who say that 79% isn't a good score. What do they know?
- To listen to you if you think we've got something wrong. Email us at yourshout@pczone.co.uk

EXCLUSIVE REVIEW!

Will Porter's only weakness is an irrational fear of small children. Which is more than a little unfortunate, given the circumstances...

DEVELOPER Monolith **PUBLISHER** VU Games WEBSITE ETA October 18 **PRICE** £34.99



AT A GLANCE...

force, it's up to you to fight squad upon squad of psychically controlled evil-doers with the gift of slowclonking weaponry. Meanwhile, your progress with interest

System requirements



TURN A corner, slap on the heightened senses and blast a surprised leather-clad drone in the kneecap. Thrown off his feet, he cartwheels through 360-degrees as the slow-motion prolongs his untimely demise - while, with either his last energies or unconscious twitch, he squeezes the trigger on his machine gun while soulfully twirling through the air. Massive chunks of masonry are ripped out of the ceiling with every bullet, and he becomes some sort of unholy Catherine wheel tumbling

through space. There are a multitude of moments like this in F.E.A.R. Moments that go beyond the threshold of the 'very good' and swerve dangerously towards some of the most visceral and satisfying enjoyment that you can physically and emotionally have with the haunted box that is the

modern PC. But, to answer your questions before the ritual waffling and prevaricating commences: a) yes the little girl shits you up good, b) yes this is an amazing game, and unfortunately c) no, the path to F.E.A.R.

being awarded a Classic award has not been as crystal clear and carefree as I would have liked. Why so? Well, we don't do that bit yet - tradition dictates that we tackle the good stuff first. And thankfully there's rather a lot of it.

B.R.U.T.A.L.

Satisfaction through combat is where F.E.A.R. excels - presenting you with many, many bloody and brutal skirmishes that are imbued with a sense of real weight, grit and reality. Although clearly I

> don't mean real reality, since by and large you're fighting in slow-motion against an

army of leather-clad drones, psychically commanded by a disturbed gentleman called Paxton Fettel who regularly dines on the flesh of the innocent. It's hardly something you'd watch on Panorama.

So why is the combat so special? Monolith has followed up a trick once played in 1997 and barely touched upon since. Y'see, F.E.A.R.'s enemy AI is a much belated next step from Half-Life's marines and a very welcome one at that. Do you remember that bit in Surface Tension when you were scurrying about in pipes below an area packed with marines and gullies, with multiple ways up into the action? The way you'd listen to the sound of footsteps, and the way that you never knew who was where, or where the next

Batteries not included There is a light that goes out every now and again

THEY'RE all shafted. (Enough with the Schwarzenegger - Ed)

I'm aware that it's a vital game mechanic and all, but isn't it a bit odd that so many vastly technological fighting units have torches that tend to go out after 20 seconds? Whether you're having a scrap on Mars or, as here, scuffling with a mad cannibal's leather army in a city's slums it seems that no-one's heard of Duracell. It's a shoddy state of affairs. I'm writing to my MP.

grenade was coming from? That's what F.E.A.R. does too, although if it was a level out of F.E.A.R. then they'd probably come down into the pipes and get you as well.

Of course, it's smoke and mirrors designed to give an illusion of sentience: the AI goes hand-in-glove with level design to give opportunities for the drones to sneak behind you or topple conveniently placed furniture. But my oh my, they're some cracking smoke and mirrors. Take, for example, the time that I was hiding behind

a pillar ("He's behind the pillar!" they cried). I charged out into the lobby of an officeblock, nailed one bad man to a wall, slo-mo karate-kicked another in the head and severely wounded another who cried "Two down! Two down!" as he raced for the exit. With him gone I had a poke around for a while, inspecting the carnage and taking screenshots of limp bodies, before heading on after him. Unfortunately for me he hadn't gone that far, and had simply ducked down to the right having gone out of the

Brutal skirmishes are imbued with a real sense of weight, grit and reality



exit. There he was, crouching with his shotgun at groin level, waiting for me to saunter past. Clever boys.

Essentially, whenever enemies move they have a purpose, or at least you can read a purpose, be they flanking, retreating or diving through a window towards you. Sometimes they run away from you and keep their gun aimed in your direction despite having turned tail; sometimes they cower behind a desk, hold their gun above their heads and fire bullets in what they assume is your vicinity. It's in the 'sometimes' you see: every battle ebbs and flows slightly differently, and it's in this that the F.E.A.R. cup doth overfloweth. The bastard hardness



"DARLING, I can

see our house

from up here.



trademark hyper-kinetic puffs of smoke, flying sparks and air of absolute chaos, and you've got something approaching combat nirvana.

As for the melee moves, well, they're quite well implemented into the controls, but hardly necessary when it all goes balls to the walls. They're fun and work nicely, but only really come into play when you're trying to pull something off with a touch of finesse and want to look cool - specifically in F.E.A.R.'s neatly designed slo-mo multiplayer bouts. But it's a better player than I who will automatically slip into a well-timed sliding tackle when turning a corner and coming eye to glowing-greeneye with an enemy - frantically jabbing at the mouse is far more my style.

PROBLEM CHILD

But is it scary? Does it take your very soul and slowly twist? Well, no. Not really. Does it make you jump out of your seat and involuntary shout obscenities? Yes, it certainly does. There are some pixel-perfect jump-points in F.E.A.R. and the little girl, she who shall not be named within this review, is an extremely neat device for its implementation - although a full cast of hurled bodies, plunging lifts and smashing windows are also called in at various points. It's all very professionally done and, although one of the best jumps comes in the demo (which isn't actually a level from the game, but instead a coagulation of several set-pieces from the full game), it works really well.

All the music in F.E.A.R. is absolutely top-notch too – but the spooky, jangly chords from the 'and now you're scared' sections is the most tension-baiting that I've ever known in a game. It's fair to say



that there's a tangible gear change whenever action switches to scares, but they're by no means tacked on and genuinely put you on the edge of your seat - if not slightly off it.

The little girl, her story and (rarity of rarities) a satisfying denouement make for a good plot. And it is a good plot. Then again, I have a feeling that people are still going to criticise it. Why? Because of the characters, mainly. Half-Life 2, to give an obvious example, might not have had a lot of plot unravelling beyond its environments and situations, but it managed to bring in an unsurpassed human element through brilliant animation, wonderful scripting and characters that you could 'get' as soon as you saw them smile.

CHARACTER CHAOS

F.E.A.R. has none of that - your team are rarely with you, and do little when they are beyond saying "Him? Send him on ahead on his own? Are you crazy?" There's barely a full character to share between them they're just your boss, two blokes who are pretty much interchangeable and a woman only memorable for fancying you at the start. Strung out over a ditch-water cast, the nuts and bolts of the excellent tale of Paxton Fettel and his little friend in the red coat become somewhat dimmed, although mercifully not in the 'scary'™ sections.

However, we haven't even got to the prime offender yet. The prosecution calls Norton Mapes to the stand. Mapes is a Jurassic Park Dennis Nedry character - the morbidly obese guy who makes everything go wrong. He's the comedy interlude. Which is a shame since a) we don't want or need a comedy interlude, and b) he's not very funny. Instead you get this annoying 'rump-ti-pump-di-bomp-di-bump' circus music whenever he appears, and an urge to shove his pack of Cheetos down his stupid fat neck. Obviously he's supposed to be irritating, but he's irritating in a remarkably irritating way, and may well end up becoming the Jar Jar Binks or DJ Ruby Rhod of the FPS.

Despite the fundamental goodness of the game, there is

"I'VE never seen you looking so scary as you did tonight...

FETTEL'S army: lithe, at school sports day.



We don't often recommend that our readers loiter in specific areas with the intention of catching sight of a young girl, then ticking the encounter off on a mental checklist. It's not a particularly healthy pursuit, and can result in prolonged confinement. But by all means keep an eye out for F.E.A.R.'s little one - on a first play she probably appears twice as many times as you actually fleetingly see her. Expect websites documenting her mystical appearances to be cropping up all over the shop...



another nagging issue. F.E.A.R. is a corridor shooter, that much is obvious and no real crime in itself, but here corridors never really change – environments, settings and textures are recycled like aluminium cans in the dustbins of particularly keen cub scouts. Some of the best set-pieces of the game take place in the

game. But you'll get

nowt more out of us.

skyscraper HQ of a malicious hi-tech corporation, but once your chopper touches down on its roof you're there for hours. Brilliant as the combat may be, and scared as you often are, you're left praying – begging – for a change. This is compounded by the game giving you no real indication of how long you're going to be there, and the fact that you're continually (well, at least twice) getting to the roof to be airlifted out before either accidentally falling all the way back in again or having your ride exploderised by hoodlums.

More than any other game, F.E.A.R. is compiled of vents, offices, corridors, more vents, elevator shafts and more vents – or slums and secret scientific places that certainly feel a lot like them. Now, if the

action had been punctuated by a few visits to F.E.A.R. HQ, decent character interaction, or simply smaller independent levels, then none of this would matter. As it is, the gargantuan sprawl of its docks and skyscrapers can numb you to what is otherwise gaming brilliance. From what we've seen in promo videos we know that there was cool, different stuff in development – like cars being chased by motorbikes and spinning through the air upside down – but time constraints or other developmental pressure means that none of this goodness made the final cut. A real shame, seeing as this is the sort of thing that would have propelled F.E.A.R. far further into the realms of classic-dom.

END OF THE LINE

So where do we go from here? Which stereotypical review ending shall we select? The 'F.E.A.R. is good, but the sequel will be amazing!' approach? Well, that's certainly more than true - but doesn't do justice to a game that is often sexier than the sexiest of sex. How about the 'great, but has issues' ending that I seem to be irrevocably careering towards? Well, that's a bit of a cop-out when it's a game that all PC gamers should play. 'Try the demo and, if you meet its pretty spicy technical demands, imagine an entire game comprised of similar action scenes one after the other (only with more robots) and make up your own mind?' No, that won't do

Settings are recycled like cans in the bins of particularly keen cub scouts





BOOM ETC!

Obviously one of the big draws of F.E.A.R. are the spiffy environmental effects - the sparks that fall, the smoke that rises and the blood that flies. But pray silence, ladies and gents, for the explosions. They're truly something special...



IS that a soldier running past a yellow barrel? Time to die, my friend! Hardly original, but I'm not one to break with convention..



LOOK at the flames licking the ceiling! Warm your hands stranger, a prettier fireball you'll never see. Until maybe in a few minutes' time.



THAT guy must be pretty toasty by now. Bit of a shame I didn't watch it all in slow-motion. Maybe F.E.A.R. 2 will have a rewind function.



MAYBE in another time and another place, me and that barrel could have been friends. I could have stored stuff in him. But not today. Not today!



at all. So how about this for an answer to the 'Why does F.E.A.R. deserve a Classic' tie-breaker question?

Today I found myself rebooting a computer network inside a windowed server room in the IT department of an evil multinational conglomerate. Suddenly five men burst in: two went to cut in behind me through a nearby corridor, two chose to leap through the glass windows next to me and another stood at the door, levelling his nailgun at me and letting rip. Glass and sparks are raining down on me as I turn on the slow-motion. I blow one's head off with my shotgun, and the second gets a chestshot that leaves the walls covered in more red than can be found in a Dulux catalogue. I've been badly wounded, but I remember the pair I saw tearing off to get behind me two seconds ago, so I bounce a grenade round the corner that I'm guessing they'll appear from. I'm rewarded when a spiralling right leg slowly and artfully flies

across my line of sight. As my slow-motion bar runs out, I stand up and the final soldier gets a clear shot and nails me to a nearby hard disc drive. In the same way that Jennifer Aniston once fell in love with a shampoo (which could perhaps explain why Brad's flounced off with Angelina by the way), I am in love with a game.

And despite the fact that I've been walking past the same level furniture for hours and hours, and despite Norton 'twat' Mapes - nothing will stop me recommending it to friends, family, passers-by in the street and, indeed, readers of PC ZONE. Grumpier gamers will find fodder to gnaw upon, but the fact remains that it's a prima donna of a game that more than succeeds in its attempts to scare and scintillate. Despite everything, I adore it - and strongly suspect you will too. PCZ



SHOULDER pads: a touch of glam rock.

Graphics Functional environments, great enemies, better explosions Sound Wonderful - from

music to footsteps Multiplayer Deathmatches and CTF with added slow-motion

- Excellent battle AI and supreme set-pieces
- Lots of jumps and shocks. if not true terror
- Moments of utter FPS brilliance
- 🔀 Poor characterisation
- 🔀 Environments and levels that outstay their welcome

R.E.A.L.L.Y. G.O.O.D.

REVIEWSFIFA06



IFA 06

Now there's a surprise. Steve Hill with this year's model

> **DEVELOPER** EA Canada **PUBLISHER** EA Sports WEBSITE www.fifa06.ea.com ETA October 2005 **PRICE** £29.99



AT A GLANCE...

EA has clearly had a long hard look at arch rival Pro Evolution Soccer, and FIFA 06 is a worthy runner-up.

System requirements

HOW IT STACKS

HE FIFA SERIES has been going for so long, that when it first came out Wayne Rooney had barely learned how to swear. Traditionally it would be left for us to report that the appearance of his bloated face on the box is the only tangible difference from last year's instalment(s). And while to the untrained eye this is superficially the case, closer inspection reveals a number of improvements.

WHEN lower-division

hairstyles attack.

The first good news is that they've got rid of those pathetic multiple-choice corners. For 06 it's a far more natural case of hoofing the ball into the box - either high or low - or playing it short. Pretty simple really, and perhaps a courtesy they'll consider extending to free kicks

As for open play, it's a more physical approach, with players frequently being bundled off the ball. So much so that it's often quite hard to play football out there, with time on the ball at a premium, although you can slow down the man in possession to give you time to execute a move. A lot of build-up play is required to get anywhere near the opposition goal, and simply getting a shot away is a big ask, as there always seems to be bodies in front of the ball, leading to a flurry of goalmouth scrambles.

DON'T BE A DUMMY

As ever, a degree of manual dexterity is required to pull off the numerous moves, and suffice to say it's not worth

attempting without a PS2 pad or equivalent. But while showboating can be a successful tactic, you'll fall on your arse at least as many times as you'll pull off an outrageous dummy.

THE all-new old

corner system.

Off the pitch, there's the usual bewildering array of options, including a thumb-ruining 15-season management mode, with lower-division fans catered for along with Premiership glory-seekers. Unlikely as it sounds, playing as The Mighty Chester, replete with real names, passable likenesses and, er, last season's



kit, is not something to be underestimated. FIFA 06 may not be perfect, but it is perfectly playable, and is probably the

START walking, hateful Wrexham infidel.

best we could have hoped for. Apart from EA buying Konami...





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REVIEWSTOTALOVERDOSE



Sun, señoritas and sombreros as Paul Presley takes a little trip down Mexico way

DEVELOPER Deadline **PUBLISHER** Eidos WERSITE www.totaloverdose.com

ETA September 16 **PRICE** £29.99



E'D ONLY SAID hello, but it seems the marketing justification for Total Overdose is already in full swing: "It's definitely not GTA. We prefer to think it's closer in spirit to the Tony Hawk's games." So we're absolutely, positively not going to compare this like for like with any GTA game. Much.

In truth, it's hard not to. There are the plentiful GTA carjackings. And there are the GTA-style cityscapes implausibly filled with car stunt ramps. And over there are all the impromptu kill-a-thon bonus missions. And to your left are all the thumping real-world

tunes. And behind those boxes is the morally dubious attitude to extreme ultra-violence.

Eidos might be saying this isn't GTA, but the parallels are impossible to ignore – it's like TO is a tribute band to GTA's headline act. You can see how the developer has tried to remove anything too

GTA-like as it went along - the variations in cars are way down, the sizes of each city area feel far smaller, no in-car radio stations, there's far less for you to do in the city (no non-mission 'life' stuff) - the idea being to distance itself from GTA at every stage.

Unfortunately, it doesn't quite come off that way. Instead you constantly feel as though you're merely playing a cut-down version of GTA, regardless of the developer's intention. The feel of the game constantly



gives you that urge to go off exploring midmissions, but the limitations in size and variety ultimately make it feel something of a wasted effort.

SUPER-SPICY

Still, it's undeniably fun. At absolutely no point does Total Overdose take itself even remotely seriously. And unlike GTA, combat is actually half decent, thanks mostly to the Max Payne-style agility and slo-mo moves. Shoot bad guys in the head while doing cartwheels off the wall. Dive left, right, forwards and back while aiming for headshots and stringing multiple kills

together for bonus rewards. Run up to someone and nick their hat, just because you can, then run away before they get too mad. Or for no discernible plot-based reason, suddenly turn into a giant Mexican wrestler and start twatting other masked tubbos about the head with a giant bat. Which is also more fun than it sounds.

The silliness extends to your special 'Loco' moves, earned through amassing multiple body counts and/or collecting tokens hidden throughout the city. El Mariachi machine-gun guitar cases, whirling 'tornado' spins of death, exploderising piñatas and the truly bizarre Sombrero Of

AT A GLANCE...

Cut-down GTA antics with a Latino flavour, mixed with Max Paynestyle gunplay and more Mexican stereotypes than a South American branch of Dixons.

System requirements

HOW IT STACKS

MAX PAYNE 2 33%

GTA: SAN ANDREAS 92%

TOTAL OVERDOSE 75%

LOCO MOVE LOCO MOVE BERLEL HEE-HEE... He sploded good.

It's like *Total Overdose* is a tribute band to *GTA*'s headline act





Music... Apparently

I'm getting too old for this shi...



Molotov. Delinquent Habits. Control Machete. Never heard of them. One trick Deadline Games missed – although perhaps understandably given its need to steer clear of *GTA* comparisons – was any kind of custom music options. There are plenty of irritatingly 'street' tunes by bands unlikely to trouble *TOTP Sunday*, but who are more than capable of making me feel old. What I would have given to be able to include my own Latin MP3 flavahs to the game – Tico Tico, Spanish Flea, the theme from *Speedy Gonzales...*

Death are just some of the options to play around with.

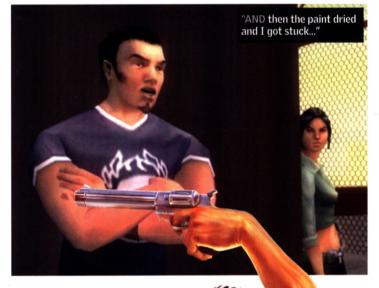
JUMP AROUND

At times it can feel relentless. The sheer volume of guns and ammo open to you, and the madcap pace combined with your Olympian-level agility, make it near impossible to actually die (and for those times when you're not quick enough, a handy rewind' function lets you turn back the clock about ten seconds to have another crack). Which means *TO* just keeps throwing wave after wave of angry stereotypes at you in place of actual enemy AI.

But mostly the frantic pace of the mayhem, the knowing daftness of the situations and the story, the energy with

which everything is presented and even the cartoon style – well, it all grows on you. Certainly it's helped by interspersing the free-form action with the self-contained story arc missions, providing much needed expansion from the limiting confines of the city areas.

As much as *Total Overdose* wants to distance itself from the *GTA* canon, the fact that *GTA* exists means it will always be held up unfavourably in comparison. But on its own merits, *TO* is brash, energetic, none too taxing and more than capable of providing some solid midtable entertainment, while *GTA* and the like get on with battling it



out at the top of the tree. It's the Tottenham Hotspur of gaming, if you will – always going to be on hand to provide some light-hearted comic relief, but never likely to put up a serious challenge to the bigger boys. While wearing a big novelty sombrero.



PCZONE

Graphics Cartoon-like, but not as polished as *GTA*Sound Good if you like Latin hip-hop, otherwise...
Multiplayer Nada

Mental

The combat moves work a treat

Free-form city

Comes off badly next to GTA

Not masses of variety

Relentless

We like eet, ees silly

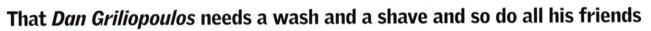
REVIEWS BARBARIAN INVASION







ROME: TOTAL WAR BARBARIAN INVASION 😇



DEVELOPER The Creative Assembly **PUBLISHER** Sega WEBSITE www.totalwar.com ETA October 26 **PRICE** £29.99



AT A GLANCE...

The Romans have pacified Europe, but now Attila and his hording Huns have arrived to show them how you really conduct war.

System requirements

HOW IT STACKS

ROME: TOTAL WAR 393%

HE ROMANS HAVE conquered Europe several times over. The Britons, the Egyptians, the Byzantines have rolled over the continent regularly - even the paltry Parthians have been given a shot at sacking Rome. (Parthian shot - see, that's a Classics joke. Sigh. Ignorant, the lot of you.) So, just when you're tiring of stomping your armies through the flora and fauna of Rome, The Creative Assembly has made an expansion pack, Barbarian Invasion, to reignite your dying passion.

To be frank (or, maybe Visigoth that's more of a Scando name), there's nowt we ain't seen before. Whilst we admire The Creative Assembly's ability, it's clear its mind is elsewhere (possibly on console ambitions). Yet again it's introduced an expansion pack that upsets the balance of the previous game, altering the strategic map dynamic by giving one side an absolute preponderance of force and no reliance on territories - in this case, the Huns, though other landless tribes can hoard to save money as well.

This is the same basic idea as *Medieval*: Viking Invasion as well as Shogun: Mongol Invasion. We're sorry, but history doesn't

consist entirely of great peaceful empires being overrun by blathering hordes, whatever the Conservative party would have us believe, and there are other ways of altering the way an RTS plays than introducing rampaging yobs.

VANDAL IN THE WIND

Moreover, the element of innovation has been displaced, from where it should be (the gameplay) to where it shouldn't (the history). We know the Dark Ages after the fall of Rome are pretty much devoid of accurate historical record, so that military styles and history in general around that

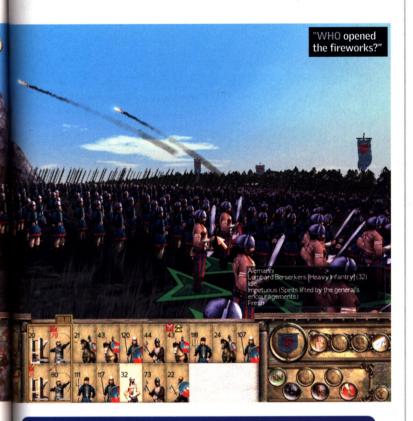
period are somewhat sketchy, but sometimes *BI* charges heedlessly, grail held

high, into myth. Just look at the Romano-British and you'll see what I mean: Graal (sic) knights? A thinly veiled King Arthur? Irish "Hounds of Culann" fighting for the English? The Creative Assembly has skirted round history with this material - it seems to be mostly myth and legend, which might put some people off. Moreover, only two of our favoured historical battles are included with the title, Mons Badonicus and the Battle of Chalons, and both are also available on the demo.

GOOD TO BE GOTH

Past that immediate, pedantic criticism, the actual play has improved. Those fantastical units, like the berserking Hounds of Culann, bring enjoyably unbalanced forces to the game, as do the (sadly confusing in their similarity and number) Barbarian tribes. The new priest (druids, monks, scientologist, etc) units buff units near them, making them targets but also very valuable for morale. Apart from that, battles are as wonderful as ever. The fantastic new ability of your light infantry to swim (it's either breast stroke or doggy-paddle, speedo fans - not sure which) also adds a whole new tactical dimension, though as it both exhausts and exposes your troops for a

substantial period of time, it's only really useful for flanking, not head-on assaults.



Horde Out

Travel to the ends of the Earth with 18-30(AD) holidays



With the senate long crushed beneath your autocratic sandal, you make you own missions in BI. Least you would, if it wasn't for the different tribal missions. The Hun, for example, have their massive hordes to conquer Constantinople and Rome, whereas the vanquished Vandals (fleeing from the Hun) have to get all the way to Spain. The Western Romans, meanwhile, have to try and hold onto 34 of their (endlessly revolting) provinces.

Moreover, the new night battles (complete with flaming torches) are gloriously impressive. Imagine having a thousand rockers holding lighters advancing at your beck and call - except with flaming arrows and catapults rather than bottles of Carling. Creative also appears to have done a stellar job in updating the graphics; we're not sure whether it's better models or the new night effects, but it looks as comely as a vestal virgin who might be up for it.

So while we're disappointed with the misplaced innovation and the lack of advancement, we still can't deny that it's Rome, that it's raised our bloodlust and our hackles in equal measure, and that it refreshes those parts that other strategy games just won't reach. Now leave us; we must trample the Imperial weaklings beneath Hunnish steel once more before our cocoa.



Graphics Pretty-pretty
Sound There's a lot of
twangy lutes
Multiplayer Same as Rome

- Excellent night battles Troublesome priests
- Doing the doggy paddle and other crazy swimming
- Fantastical elements
- Seen it all before





PILOT DOWN: BEHIND ENEMY LINES

The fun is over for you, Tommy

DEVELOPER Kuiu **PUBLISHER** Oxygen Interactive WEBSITE www.pilotdowngame.com

ETA Out Now **PRICE** £29.99

System requirements



RE KUJU AND Oxygen Interactive stuck in 2001 or something? Last month we had the criminally bad Conspiracy: Weapons Of Mass Destruction (20 minutes of your life you'll never get back); this month it's Pilot Down and things aren't much better.

Trapped in World War II (or a bland, texture-free, sub-standard, AI-filled version of it anyway), you have to sneak about from one level to the next, silently offing the odd German soldier in a manner that would have Sam Fisher laughing into his goggles, and working your way towards freedom.

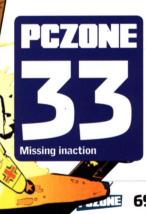
To look at the recent output by Kuju, in terms of game mechanics, visual quality, or even interest, you can't help but think the staff has been replaced by a bunch of work experience kids programming with copies of My First Game Creator rather than C++, or the whole team is busy ploughing through a series of



contractual obligation titles in order to clear the decks for something better. On a personal level, my hopes for it making a decent fist of EA's Rail Simulator are fading with each passing release.

There are occasional flashes of originality that indicate someone in the office was looking at the stars from the gutter of his desk. RPG-style stat improvement, comic-book level interludes, inventory juggling - but it's all too little, too late, as the whole thing is just woefully unengaging. Free from polish, variety or flair, at 30 quid you're far better off with just about any other game. Apart from Conspiracy of course.

Paul Preslev



REVIEWSMYSTV







THINKING in a winter wonderland.

It's over. It's finally over. Paul Presley salutes one of the greats as it ventures forth for the last time

DEVELOPER Cyan Worlds **PUBLISHER** Ubisoft WEBSITE www.mystworlds.com ETA September 29 **PRICE** £29.99



THINK WE'RE all finally past the hoary old "Myst is dull, it's an interactive photo album" cliché, yeah? I mean, biggest-selling PC game of all time, ten-year legacy, fans all over the world, east and west. Just because you don't carry a gun or shoot aliens in the neck and have to try thinking for once, it doesn't make it a bad game. In fact, it makes it a very, very good game, and *Myst V* is one of the best yet.

Of course, the word 'Myst' is itself enough to turn off entire chunks of the gaming populace, so if you're still reading this I can only assume you're either a) one of the Presley Protectors (as my burgeoning fan club is known - join today, badges, posters and everything), hooked on my every word, or b) someone who appreciates the finer things in life. Like games that stretch the muscles in your brain rather than the muscles in your trigger finger.

With that as a given, you're probably somewhat familiar with the Myst series, meaning I can dispense with the lengthy back story and just say that End Of Ages is exactly what it says on the tin, the last of the series, the end of the line, the last stop, el destinato del finalé. Seems Cyan Worlds has had enough and wants to explore pastures new (probably a shooter), and has decided to tie up the loose ends and bring everyone's story to a close.

END OF THE WORLD

And that story is? Remember the little girl from Myst IV, Yeesha? Now she's all grownup and lamenting her family's long-running burden. The 'ages' (worlds) of the long-dead D'ni tribe are dying, there's a rival vying for ultimate power to enslave the peaceful Bahro creatures, and you have to travel to each of the four worlds, retrieve four

powerful 'slates' and decide the fate of all and sundry. Except is everything as it seems? Can you really trust Yeesha? Is the rival really all that bad? Can you believe it's not butter?

OK, yes, it's yet another variation on the age-old 'collect the magical stones and save the world' plot that's been around since time began, but it's handled so well that you hardly notice. Immersion into this world of fantastical architecture and landscapes is Myst V's biggest hook. The moment you first step forward and realise the slideshow worlds of past Mysts have been replaced with true first-person 3D, you're sold. The old-style control method is still there for purists, but really, why would you want to go back? Myst has, pardon the pun, come of age and who are we to deny its growth?

So the story holds up and is told extremely well considering it's really just a





AT A GLANCE...

The long-running interactive slideshow/enthralling adventure series finally comes to a close. Lateral-thinking caps at the ready.

System requirements

HOW IT STACKS FAHRENHEIT 90%

There's a much darker tone to events, fitting perhaps, for the final lights out

Etch-A-Sketch

Each world has a stone tablet. Draw the right symbols on it and you'll access part of the world that was previously denied, or cause an environmental effect needed to solve a puzzle. But you can draw anything you like...



WILL opted for a spot of magazine loyalty. "I think we do roxxOr," he explained, before we put him to death for trying to talk street.



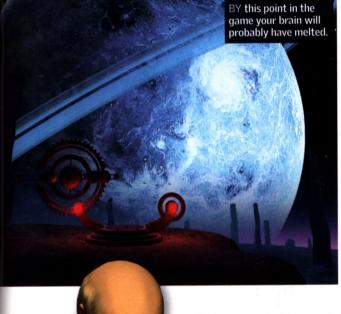
JAMIE ummed and ahhed before letting his baser instincts show through. "Sorry, I got bored," he shrugged before loading up Manhunt.



SUZY, being a girl, wanted pictures of ponies and that. "But I'm more of a fahcking man than anyone here," she said, explaining her final effort.



IT was left to me then, to make best use of the space, and I don't think it was a bad effort all told. Now, just need to hide that copy of Photoshop.



broken-up narrative interspersed with your progression through each Age. The complete history of past titles is told through fragments of Yeesha's journal that you discover as you go, filling in the blanks for newcomers, triggering fond memories for old hands who struggled with the lateralthinking tasks of old. Those same veterans may also notice the much darker tone to events this time round, fitting perhaps, as Myst prepares for the final lights out.

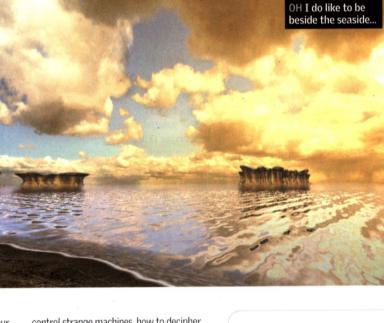
BRAIN DRAIN

Then there's the puzzles. Where Myst has always had the edge over most other esoteric 'em ups is that the puzzles have always made logical sense within each game world, and never feel tacked on in order to make a game. Same here. Myst V is a world of working out how to

control strange machines, how to decipher ancient languages and how to manipulate the entire environment to make progress. Each of the four worlds feel like single, giant puzzles in themselves. Other games will give you a pretty-looking world and make you play a game of 3D chess just to open a door.

If there is a complaint, I would say that it feels a bit shorter than previous titles. It seems to be over just as you really start getting hooked. The slate idea is nicely handled, (draw symbols on ancient stone tablets to command the Bahro and navigate about), but you do feel as though it could have been taken much further, opened more variety into the game.

But otherwise Myst V is a solid, enjoyable end to this magnificent (some say under-appreciated) series. The graphics are as beautiful as ever, the presentation is immaculate, the story keeps you gripped and your brain will appreciate the workout before you go back to killing it with beer. cheesy Wotsits and Hollyoaks. So long Myst, you will be, er, missed. PEZ



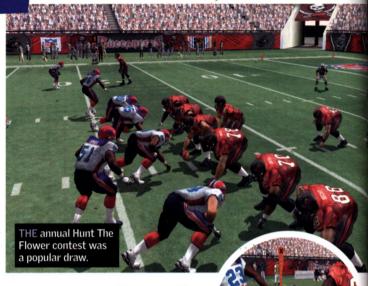
Graphics That old Myst magic, out in true 3D Sound Atmospheric, although could use more mus
Multiplayer
Nope. URU taught
them that lesson

- **URU's full 3D movement**
- Puzzles that are actually in context
- Ties up all the ongoing story threads nicely
- Seems shorter than usual
- Probably won't win over the non-Myst crowd

A grand finale

REVIEWSMADDENNFLO6





MADDEN NFL 06

OMEWHERE DEEP IN the

volcano lair (I haven't been so can't

a great big mess of papers with

confirm which), there must be a great

big filing cabinet. Inside, one expects, is

different feature 'ideas' scrawled onto

each. Further conjecture would assume

this drawer is opened once a year by the

Madden design team, three to five 'ideas' are plucked out at random,

several hours are spent bolting them

haphazardly onto the previous year's

game engine, a quick spit and shine

bowels of EA Sports' no doubt

palatial office/kingdom/secret

Back on the field again? Paul Presley sees what's new

DEVELOPER EA Sports PUBLISHER EA Sports WEBSITE

www.easports.com ETA Out Now PRICE £29.99

AT A GLANCE...

American Football EA Sports-style. Heavy on the presentation, but with a half-decent game attached. This year's theme: offensive passing plays.

System requirements

HOW IT STACKS

MADDEN NFL 2005 84%

MADDEN

applied to the graphics and boom, that year's new *Madden* title is good to go.

FANTASY DRAFT

That's unfair. There's usually some pattern to it. Last year it was defence, this year it's passing play improvements. Next year it'll probably be running plays, while *Madden 08* will focus on kicking teams

and *Madden 09* will incorporate xTreme Street Respec' modes. Probably.

To be honest, we just wish EA Sports would sit down and make all these improvements in one go rather than ration each bit of the game out, year by year. Of course, it does this with every one of its sodding sports ranges, but that doesn't make it any less infuriating.

STAR-SPANGLED

Slightly more thought has gone into the new Superstar mode – live the life of an NFL hotshot (you even get to make movies in a strange 'acting' mini-game), while the Total Control Simulation mode turns things into a *Pokémon*-style card game.

Other than that, it's much the same as before – and we mean literally the same. The actual American Football side of things is no better or worse than it's ever been, putting up a perfectly good simulation of the sport (although the dodgy – and unproven – third quarter

AI rally still seems to be present). Still no improvement on the graphical front mind you, with player textures looking pretty poor and a surprising lack of razzle-dazzle on the presentation front (the cheerleaders appear to have gone completely).

It's a hoary old summation, but it's sadly the truth that existing *Madden*-ites won't get anything you can't live without here. It seems that now EA is the sole rights holder to the official NFL licences, and the opposition has folded its tables and left, it seems to have taken its foot off the gas. Better luck next year.

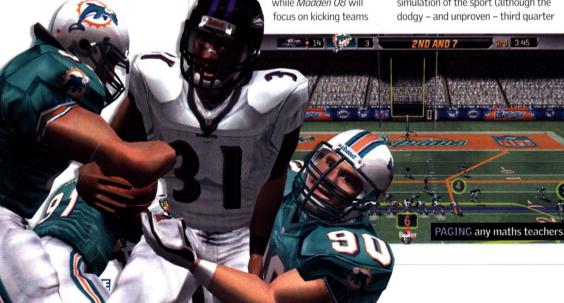


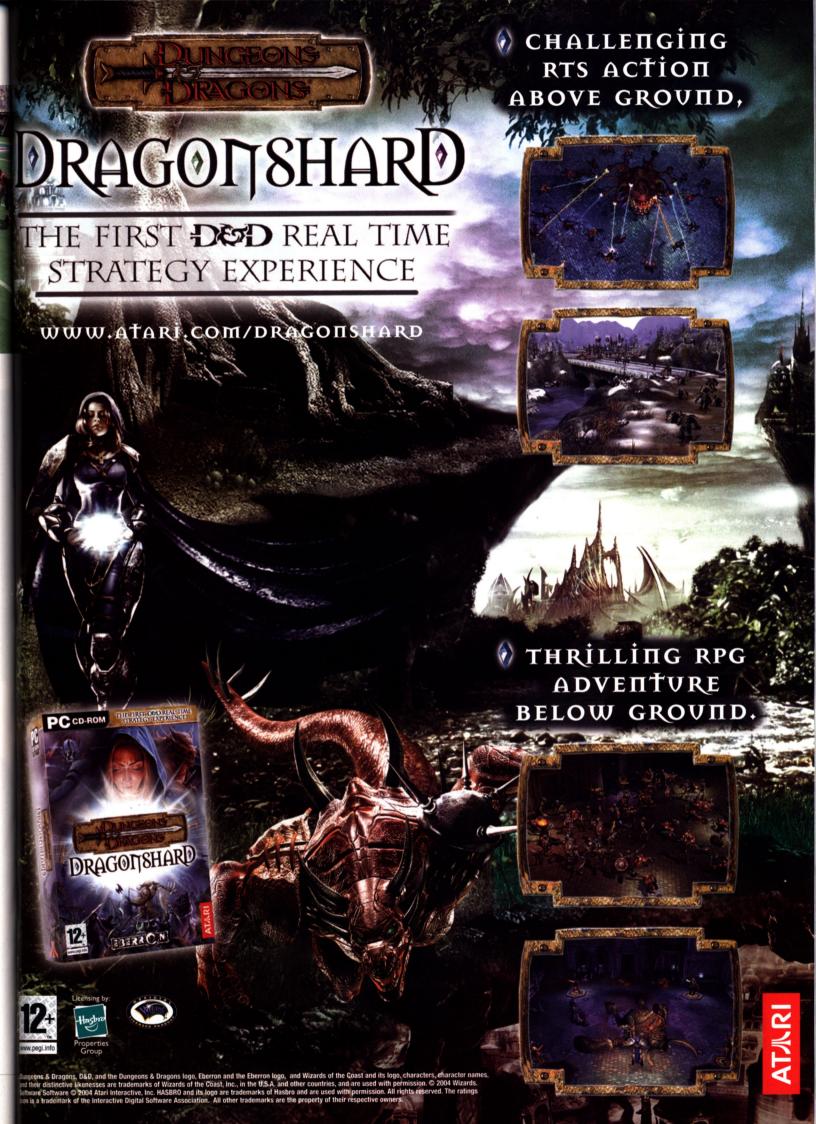
Graphics Oddly soulless and ugly textures
Sound Nice musical mix plus seamless commentary
Intrusively commercial lobby filled with

braying fools

- Still the best game of American Footie out there
- Superstar mode provides a change of pace
- Official teams and players
- Visually unimpressive
- Can't help feeling Madden
 07 will be better









SNIPER ELITE

Paul Presley holds his breath, takes aim and fires one off

DEVELOPER Rebellion **PUBLISHER** Ubisoft **WEBSITE**

www.rebellion.co.uk **ETA** September 23 **PRICE** £29.99



AT A GLANCE...

Sneaking about in a World War II stylee, even though the bad guys are those dirty commies, rather than those dirty Nazis.

System requirements

HOW IT STACKS



SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY

91%

PER ELITE 69%

88%

IGHT, WHAT WE have here is a sort of historical *Splinter Cell*, minus the handstands and night-vision goggles. Lots of sneaking from one bit of handily-placed rubble cover to the next. Lots of seeing the enemy before they see you, then poking their eyeballs out with high velocity bullets fired from 15 miles away. Lots of tightly controlled action across a series of 20 or so tightly contained levels.

Background: it's the sequel to WWI, coming up on the final stretch of the action. The Third Reich has fallen at the final hurdle and Russian and Allied troops are advancing all over the shop. It'll all be over by Christmas, give or take a few months, but the danger hasn't quite passed.

You're about to fire the first shots in the all-new Cold War, even before the current one has finished. Talk about impatient. Reason seems to be that those pesky Soviets-to-be are intent on nicking the German's atom bomb secrets and it's your job, as part of the American's highly elite sniper division, to pop along and stop them by shooting people in the neck from long distances.

Which means a set of objective-based, pre-planned maps to negotiate, mostly rubble-strewn cities and towns, with the usual goals being to sneak in, contact an

agent, identify a target and find a good bit of cover until the chance for a shot turns up.

SHUFFLE & MOVE

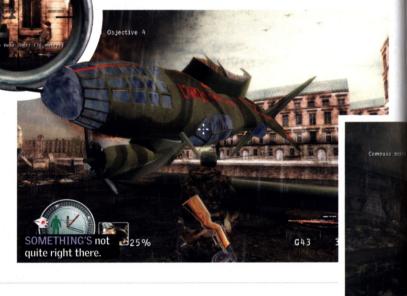
There is slightly more creativity at work though. Killing Martin Bormann (Waylan Smithers to Hitler's Montgomery Burns, if you will) by sneaking up to his staff car, planting some TNT and then blowing it up with a well-placed shot is one example.

Being as how the word 'sniper' is in the title of the game, you'd expect

there to be quite a large amount of emphasis on this side of the shooting match. I'm not certain Company Marier Copens of the C

we're talking the most accurate longdistance murder simulation ever committed to C++, but there's enough elements to play here to keep you amused for a fair bit. Hold your breath for ten seconds or so to steady your aim. Go prone for greater accuracy. Aim for different parts of the body and factor wind and gravity in too.

On the higher realism settings it all adds up to some pretty satisfying shots when you pull them off. Especially as the viewpoint switches to 'bullet-cam' and zooms in on the action, complete with



Back and to the left

Warning kids, guns can be dangerous



JFK-style head giblets flying off should your aim be as true as Lee Harvey's.

RAT-A-TAT-TAT

What doesn't really work is the part where you're called upon to wield conventional bullet-lobbers and mow down soldiers that get too close. The third-person engine just doesn't really hold up to that kind of action with any degree of satisfaction of believability.

Nor do the actual maps convey any sense of being more than limited-scope playgrounds designed for a specific purpose. No real sense of realism is on show (the old invisible barrier trick rears it's very ugly head once more). In a sense, they're just giant 3D puzzles, waiting for you to work out the single correct route through to the end.

Sniper Elite could well have been a terrifically good simulation of being a wartime sneaky fella had there been a greater sense of ambition displayed in the design process. As it is, you're left with a game that doesn't really offer a great deal more in terms of ammo delivery that we haven't seen done equally well in more popular, less subject-specific shooters.

T'S always raining

A quick word about those close-up cameras after a particularly good shot. They are bloody gory. OK, the graphics aren't exactly Unreal 3.0 quality or anything, but it's still quite unsettling to line up a small cluster of pixels in your sights, pull the trigger and then suddenly be confronted with a great big close-up of a huge chunk of flesh erupting from the side of a virtual man's head, chest or neck

Still, you are rewarded on a scoreboard for the macabre for long distance kills, moving target kills, twofor-one kills, buy one get one free kills etc. Just cover your ears and don't think about the morality of it all.

Nice zoom blurs, otherwise average Sound Good gunshot modelling
Multiplayer Duelling sniper rifles

- A change from the usual kill 'em all gameplay
- Bullet-cam for tricky shots
- Sniping dynamics seem quite believable
- Levels design not too realistic
- Visually dated
- Wery much trial-and-error





them all up for last year's review of NHL 2005. The latest iteration of EA's ice hockey series is basically more of the same game, with the addition of slightly improved graphics, analog stick passes and special moves, pucks that can bounce realistically and injure players, and a tweaked create-aplayer function.

However, behind the plastic-coated PR spin, NHL 06 remains a fantastic ice-hockey knockabout that still has the best commentary and TV replays of any sports game. Playing is enormous fun, skidding players about the ice with the grace of Torville and Dean and the violence of Vinnie Jones (an obvious combination if ever there was one).

NHL retains the fantastic mid-game punch-ups that made its name and has that must-have-one-more-game quality

that all the best sports sims need to have - Pro Evolution Soccer being the best example. Like PES, you don't even have to enjoy or play the sport to enjoy NHL 06 – the game is as smooth and slick as your team coach's hair.

Included again is the Dynasty mode, which presents you with a cut-down Football Manager-style game, even allowing you to let the computer decide results so you can concentrate on the most interesting aspects of ice hockey such as setting ticket prices and analysing fan loyalty (the Glazer family will love this). A quality sports title even if you hate the ice.

Jamie Sefton









HEROES OF THE PACIFIC

A flying slice of fun that can be Sam Kieldsen's wingman anytime...

> **DEVELOPER IR Gurus PUBLISHER** Codemasters WEBSITE

www.heroesofthepacific.com **ETA** Out now **PRICE £19.99**



AT A GLANCE...

Derring-do-tastic arcade flight sim recreating the war in the Pacific, from Pearl Harbour to Iwo Jima. Chocks away and, er, banzai!

System requirements

HOW IT STACKS

LIGHT SIMS CAN be divvied up into two main categories: those that come supplied with a phone book-sized manual and require you to come supplied with an even larger beard, and those like Heroes

Put it this way. A typical level in Heroes might have you shooting down 50 Japanese bombers, blowing open the gates of a POW camp and clearing a field of anti-shipping mines the only way you know how - by strafing the ever-loving crap out of them. What you won't be doing is spending five hours cruising 30,000ft over Jizzlobistan in order to bomb an underground bunker eight miles away, then flying for another five hours to get back to your airbase.

Indeed, so overpowering is Heroes' arcadey flavour that you don't even have to worry about landing your bird. In the few missions which do require you to touch down on the tarmac, you simply head through a couple of floaty ring waypoints and the rest is done for you. Put simply, the emphasis has been taken off realism and placed on something we like a lot more: fun.

BIG FUN

For instance, the game has loads of close range dogfights - these are great fun. There are dive-bombing runs against Japanese carriers – yet more diverting japery. Strafing lines of enemy jeeps and landing craft - something that's guaranteed to put a wide, wide smile on the average gamer's face. We could go on and on and list all the other fun things about a World War II flying game, but we won't. Chances are you can guess what they are

anyway; and chances are they're in Heroes Of The Pacific somewhere.

Unsurprisingly, it's as easy to play as one of those pianos where the keys light up (we weren't musically gifted in the Kieldsen household). There's a choice between two control modes - Arcade and Professional but the differences are small and unless you're on the wrestling fan-side of stupid, neither should present any difficulties. You'll be performing barrel rolls and loop the loops like a pro in no time.

While the controls aren't particularly challenging, the game itself certainly is. Even on the







EAFIRES-TAKING ALL BEFORE THEM IN THE PACIFIC OU can fly Russian, Japanese, German and British planes too.

You may have guessed that Heroes Of The Pacific doesn't force you to bother with things like adjusting ailerons and lowering landing gear, but it's not the dumbest game around. Perform well on the harder game settings and you'll get the chance to upgrade the standard planes, adding distinctive paint-jobs and boosting capabilities. While it doesn't match the average racing game in terms of customisability (is that even a word?), it's a nice touch.

second easiest difficulty setting (there are four in all), we often found ourselves in the kind of situation in which hair is ripped out, teeth are gnashed and cats are kicked. You don't get shot down much, and instead missions are often failed because of slightly annoying things (allies biting the dust, vital buildings being destroyed, enemies escaping over an invisible line etc). While these might sound fair enough on paper, it often feels like the game isn't giving you enough leeway. Hence the tendency for feline abuse.

POOR KITTY

Some might not find this a bad thing (the difficulty level, not the cat-kicking), and if you're persistent you'll eventually find yourself rewarded with upgrade points (see 'Pimp My Plane', above), not to mention access to various historical missions and extra flyable aircraft. Yay!

There are tons of missions to plough through (each filled with optional objectives) and the pleasing variety of action (dogfights, ground attacks, torpedo runs) keeps you interested throughout. So to sum up, Heroes Of The Pacific is big, it's not really clever, but you'll have a blast playing it all the same.

Graphics Fine, but not cutting edge Sound Nice explosions and wingman chatter
Multiplayer Supports split-screen

A blast to play Tidy visuals

Loads of planes on-screen

Lacks realism

Feels unfair at times

Heavy on the flight, low on the sim



ENIGMA: RISING TIDE

The tide is high, but is this sim holding on?

DEVELOPER Tesseraction Games **PUBLISHER** Tesseraction Games WEBSITE www.warfleet.net

ETA Out now **PRICE** £19.99

System requirements



OH, GOLD EDITION. This must be something special. Actually this gold edition of Enigma: Rising Tide is just a reheat of a sub-standard (ho ho) 2003 naval sim with some upgraded texturing and environmental effects, a selection of new missions and, for some unfathomable (ho ho) reason, new tunes

Trouble is the game's remained the same. Command a selection of watery vessels - frigates, torpedo boats, submarines, giant inflatable hotdog sausages - as you fight just prior to the second of our most recent world wars for either the Americanos, das Mütiland or us beautiful British types.

Which sounds quite good, eh? It would be if there was any sense of depth (ho ho) to it. Instead, everything is on a surface (ho ho) level of complexity. I expect the idea was to make it accessible to everyone. Instead, it just sinks any interest (ho ho) quicker than a torpedo up a porthole.

Worse, though the graphics have been made shipshape (ho ho), the interface is more cumbersome than ever and you spend more time fighting against the controls than the enemy.

On the plus side, there's a voice command system that lets you shout "Dive! Dive! Dive!" at your screen, there are a lot of ships to choose from and you can play





online against thousands of others. At least you could, except that feature hasn't been implemented due to some legal action in the US. Not that it would have helped much anyway. Enigma is a leaky vessel at best (ho ho). I'll stop now. Paul Preslev



REVIEWSCONFLICT:GLOBALSTORM



CONFLICT: FOUR pricks in a jeep. GLOBAL STOR After the Desert and Vietnam, Steve Hill is back with the boys again

AIT A MINUTE, Global DEVELOPER Pivotal Games **PUBLISHER** Eidos Storm? What happened to WEBSITE Global Terror? Here's what www.conflict.com probably happened: after some high-**ETA** September 30 profile incidences of global terror, the **PRICE** £29.99 publisher shat its pants and opted for a more wishy-washy name. In the current

> was probably a wise move, as with everything from GTA to The Sims being blamed for the downfall of civilisation, it was a headline that Eidos could do without.

🚅 climate, it

Fear not, the game remains the same, with the Gulf War veterans reunited as a weapon in the war on, er, global terror.

Retrained as a rapid response counterterrorist unit, if there's a problem, and if you can find them, maybe you can hire Red Team, otherwise known as Bradley, Jones, Connors and Foley:

Conveniently enough, there is a big problem brewing in the jungles of South America, where a bunch of second- and third-generation Nazis have formed a terrorist cell by the name of March 33, in honour of the date that Hitler declared the Third Reich, Intent on destabilising world governments, it's a story that could have come straight out of 24, and to be honest, we only know the basics because we've read it. Does anyone ever follow the plot in games

like this? When it comes down to it, it's really just a lot of people shouting "Tango down!" During the course of this review we must have killed about 1.800 people without ever really knowing who they were, or what they were trying to achieve. As a rule of thumb, if they have a moustache or a foreign accent, they would appear to be fair game.

MARCHING POWDER

Somewhere in the midst of the carnage, we do remember storming a Colombian cocaine factory, killing all of its employees and then setting about destroying their equipment, thus insuring that the streets of London would be short of sniff for at least a week. There was also a bit where we had to go to Seoul to protect a senator, something that involved killing in the region of 100 Koreans, while he kept his head down and made a dash for the chopper.

For all its pretensions towards being a tactical shooter in the mould of Rainbow Six et al, Global Storm is a far more hectic affair.





The fourth Conflict outing sees the Desert Storm boys reunited for a whistle-stop tour of the world's terrorist hotspots

System requirements

HOW IT STACKS

CONFLICT: VIETNAM 75%



REVIEWSCONFLICT: GLOBALSTORM

Healing Process

Shot, was he? Not to worry. In the heat of the battle, screaming for help should see one of your helpful team-mates pop up with the right medication to have you on your feet in a thrice...









TOUCH ME: "Oh, I'm being shot while I'm working on your open wound."

HEAL ME: "A could see your open wound."

HEAL ME: "All better! Now if you could see your way to healing me..

flack and administer magical medication which restores you to full health.

However, in doing so he's likely to get shot himself, at which point you'll have to heal him, or, if you are him, shout for help. In the midst of a ferocious firefight, all four soldiers can be involved, and it turns into a farcical daisy-chain of healing, crying and occasionally dying. Encapsulating the futility of war in one tragic vignette, it's a scene worthy of Joseph Heller's seminal *Catch 22*. Alternatively, it's just really stupid.



In less philosophical matters, the game's interface has been streamlined, giving you quicker access to weapons and so on, and making it less a case of inventory management than before. And in what is being hailed as a feat of mathematics and programming, grenades can now be instantly thrown exactly where you aim them, rather than leaving you to judge the flight path, which somewhat takes the skill, and indeed, fun out of it. And while we're told that "the AI of the enemy has been significantly improved," we'd have to ask just how thick they were before, as this lot seem happy to run blindly towards the business end of a shotgun.

Districts

Districts

Party

XPLODING

helicopter included.

Your own boys aren't too bright either, and will quite happily go walkabout if you leave them unattended. And in one curious moment, a soldier froze on the spot, a thousand-yard-stare etched on his warravaged face. The only way he could be freed from his trance was by shooting him

to within an inch of his life, healing him and telling him to run away, at which point the healer became frozen on the same spot. Almost something of a

mini-game, although we've been assured this will be fixed before final release.

With its console roots showing clearer than a bad peroxide rinse, it all looks a bit 2001, and other minor glitches include guns inadvertently disappearing into walls – quite an impressive trick if they'd meant it.

On paper, it might not sound too great, but luckily games aren't played on paper. While it has its flaws, it also has a certain charm. A quick dabble can somehow turn into an arse-numbing four-hour session, if only to see where you're going next. A bit like Judith Chalmers with guns, although we're not sure she ever visited a Ukrainian chemical plant or the Kashmir mountains.

And in a twist that we're just about to ruin, one of the regular characters goes missing in action and is replaced by a sassy broad called Carrie Sherman.

Sherman of course being rhyming slang for 'wank'.









Graphics Console standard
Sound Passable
Multiplayer Online co-op

- Occasionally tense
- Rarely dull
- Varied scenery
- Unrealistic player damage
- Console bent
- Chugs a bit

74

Storm in a teacup

TRADE FIGHT BUILD THINK



REUNION

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PCZONE

WWW.X3REUNION.COM

EGDEOGR



REVIEWS FABLE: THE LOST CHAPTERS









Suzy Wallace discovers that it's good to be bad in Lionhead's RPG

DEVELOPER Lionhead **Studios PUBLISHER** Microsoft WEBSITE

www.lionhead.com/ fabletlc **ETA** September **PRICE** £29.99





AT A GLANCE...

Light-hearted but highly polished RPG that explores the realms of good vs evil and chicken abuse.

System requirements

HOW IT STACKS

INGEON SIEGE II 80%

'M STOOD IN the middle of the local town, looking for something to do. On a curious whim, I remove all of my clothes. I'm sporting a set of Union Jack Y-fronts. Spying a nearby crate, I smash it open. A sudden holler goes up from behind me: "I saw that! That's naughty!" As I turn around, a small brat is running full-pelt for the nearest guard. An unlucky chicken feels my annoyance as I boot it across the square. Still nearly naked as the guards near, I flip the finger at them and make a mad dash for the other end of town with my entourage in tow. Imaginary Benny Hill music plays in my head. The guards finally catch me, take all my money in fines and dump me outside of town in nothing but my patriotic kecks. A nearby guard calls me "arseface". I fart and laugh to myself.

Welcome, ladies and gentleman to the world of Fable. A world in which the traditional trappings of a fantasy RPG (swords, spells, stats - check) collide headon with the phenomenon of cause and effect, meaning that pretty much every action you take will have some result in

game, from your choice of haircut to whose blood you decide to spill. It's a simple concept, but one that's carried off with great aplomb, allowing you to play either the godly hero who gains power and respect through helping out the locals, or the dastardly anti-hero who steals everything that's not nailed down, beats up small children and throws a 'kiss my arse' gesture to anyone not afraid to look.

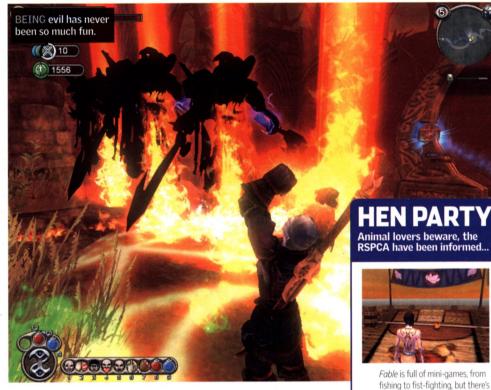
LOOKING GOOD

Lionhead has always been one to try something a bit new and Fable's no different, starting you off as a wee nipper and taking you all the way through your character's life, right through to the pension and 'Just For Men' at the end. Over time, your actions will start to impact upon your character's appearance. Enjoy picking fights and stealing stuff? Then watch









as your character's skin turns pale, horns start to protrude from your forehead and flies gather around your napper. Prefer helping out the locals? Then your skin will start to glow, you'll get a halo and faint butterflies will encircle you. This is just the beginning as well, with tattoos and different hair, moustache and beard styles all on offer to help you customise your ultimate badass/goody-two-shoes style.

SEEK IT OUT

While the story progresses through the completion of the main missions, there's tons of extra content to be found too: fist-fighting, grave-digging, property development, card games and getting drunk to name a few. Of course, you could just get pissed down your local, come home, throw up and badger your partner for sex. Just like real life really.

Everything looks pretty tasty too running through the upgraded graphics engine and Lionhead's seen right to not only give the

graphics a swift boot up the arse, but also extend the improvements to new spells. expressions, missions, regions and more.

These aren't just crappy tacked-on extras either - an in-game brothel (where you can

mention the drawbacks too. If you play games just for the challenge, you'll be disappointed - Fable's not set to tax either your grey matter or your fingertips (although the 'lost chapters' at the end

Or you could just get pissed, throw up and badger your partner for sex

choose to man-whore yourself out for extra moolah) and a massive extra section based after the end of the original are just some of the fantastic extensions to the tale.

One of Fable's most refreshing facets is its attempt to tell an RPG tale in a lighter and more humorous style than normal. Its use of strong British accents, bizarre side quests (magic mushrooms anybody?) and a liberal sprinkling of humour throughout may not be to everyone's tastes, but it does make for an experience that's far from dull.

Having so far sung its praises, we should

definitely provides much more of a task). Also, despite having the extra third, it's still a tad on the short side for an RPG. Morrowind's endless expanses this definitely is not.

Fable may not have reached the lofty heights of Molyneux's original vision, but the result is still a hugely amusing and entertaining way to fritter away the hours. If you're looking for a highly polished RPG in which to exorcise your inner demons (and kick defenceless farmyard animals), Fable tells the right story.







only one that counts in our eyes.

chicken-kicking. From a humble

pastime to the heady heights of

an organised competition on the

size-nines can propel a hen is big

news in the world of Albion. But it's not just distance that counts;

with the higher-marked squares

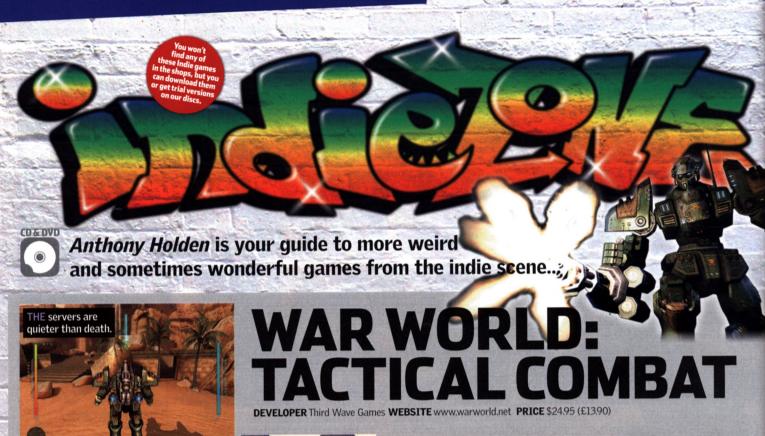
sitting to the side, direction and

Unconfirmed reports state that

control are just as important.

large broods of chickens have been seen fleeing Oakvale.

Oakvale beach, how far your



WITH new environments and a better control system, there could be something to this.

HANG ON A SEC, this looks like a real game, not some archaic bug-ridden nonsense created by bored IT students in the quiet times between wanking and blogging about Stargate - so what's

it doing in Indie Zone?

Well, actually War World is about as indie as they come, created by three developers (programmer, artist, musician) with a custom-built engine and next to no budget. It's an impressive achievement, especially considering the results are, visually at least, almost polished enough to stand alongside mainstream games.

Unfortunately, War World is a very basic game at heart - a third-person arena shooter with stompy robots and piss-weak jetpacks. The focus is online play, fleshed out by the ability to customise your mech with 50-plus weapon systems. Within this extremely limited remit it plays well, but the arenas are tiny, the single-player game pointless and servers deserted.

We're hardly surprised, as for all its good looks, War World offers about 1 per cent of the gameplay of Tribes: Vengeance. And as that game is now available online for £5.99 (it's true - we checked!), there's really no comparison to be made here.







DEVELOPER Sillysoft WEBSITE www.sillysoft.net/lux PRICE \$24.95 (£13.90)

LUX IS A RISK CLONE, pure and simple. It's also over a year old, but was recently updated to v5, a major revision adding unique starting scenarios, new graphics and sound plus a number of multiplayer tweaks. Despite this, it's still just computerised Risk, and less polished than those produced by Atari a few years back.

So why are so many people playing it? For a start, it's because they can - Lux runs on Macs, Linux and about every Windows variant you can name. It's playable online or LAN, as well as

against some surprisingly challenging AI personalities, and is hugely customisable, with a map-editing feature and programmable AI. Plus, like its inspiration, it's mildly addictive.

But it's still just Risk! For my money, a better option for a bit of simple strategy action is Battalion: Head To Head (which is free - see issue 155). If you insist on paying for something you've probably played before,

Lux is a passable board

game conversion.

OUTER-RIM POD DIGGER

DEVELOPER Photonik Games WEB www.photonikgames.net PRICE \$14.95 (£8.25)

IT SEEMS THE indie games scene has spawned a new genre - the 'stratpuzzler' - and Outer-Rim Pod Digger is one. To us, it's more like Lemmings without danger, as you try to rescue Bubblemen trapped in a crude 2D environment. Your task is to ensure they get to the rescue rocket in one piece, avoiding such hazards as vortexes, water and radioactive waste. To do so, you have a number of tools at hand such as digging equipment, steel girders and energy lifts.

We say 'without danger' because you have all the time in the world to do it the Bubblemen only emerge when you tell them to, by which time the 'safe' path through the level is cleared.

As such, it's more an exercise in digging and building, offering less challenge than last issue's Professor Fizzwizzle.





THE game has to invent some clumsy 'bonus abilities' just to make it workable.





DEVELOPER Gulny Games WEB www.alawar.com/games/crystalix PRICE \$16.99 (£9.80)

ON THE GULNY Games website, the Minsk-based outfit makes the stunning claim that its games 'make people happy and lucky". Which is certainly true in the case of Crystalix, if by 'happy' it means the kind of happiness that comes from throwing your monitor out the window in disgust, and by 'lucky' it means the fact that it lands on the genitals of a Gulny employee who happens to be walking by.

In a move that would give even the Re-Animator pause, Crystalix blends elements of Tetris and Bejeweled to create an unholy mess. The aim, as ever, is to clear the board of coloured blocks, this time by matching them with Tetris shapes that scroll across the bottom of the screen. Allow too many unused shapes to stack up and it's game over; clear the board and it's on to the next pile.

It's a marriage that works about as well as Jacko and Lisa-Marie, and if anything proves even more ill-advised. In a word, hateful.

DREAM MATCH

DEVELOPER Bimboosoft WEBSITE www.bimboosoft.com PRICE \$4.95 (£2.75)



THIS DULL YET accurate tennis

simulation costs around the same amount as a pint of malt liquor in central London. As such, it seems almost churlish to point out that the controls are sluggish and the presentation blander than a tax accountant's diary, not to mention that it only offers very basic exhibition and challenge modes. And it would just be rubbing salt in the wounds to mention that it's also rock hard, requiring Herculean levels of concentration just to keep the ball in play, let alone accomplish something as

ambitious as a lob.



Despite all this it's not completely disastrous. Dream Match looks decent enough, and once you've got your head around the awkward interface, it's vaguely playable. It has absolutely nothing to recommend it over the likes of Sega's Virtua Tennis series, but for the cost



of a bag of chips,

who's complaining?

BUDGET

If your favourite food is beans on toast, this is the section for you...





MYST IV: REVELATION

WEBSITE www.mystrevelation.com PRICE £9.99

JUST TO BE clear, the Myst series is the BIGGEST-SELLING GAME SERIES OF ALL TIME. Of. All. Time. Bigger than all your Half-Lifes, all your Far Crys, all your Doom 3s, your Battlefields and, yes, all your Grand Theft Autos. And still it gets kicked around like a redheaded stepchild by games journos unwilling to free their minds and uncurl their trigger fingers for even the briefest of moments. What does a game have to do to earn some respect around here?

While Myst V is busy tying up all the loose ends, rounding off all the open chapters and generally taking to the stage for a final bow and a tearful farewell, Myst IV: Revelation had the unenviable task of trying to repair the damage done to the series by the aborted online attempt of URU: Ages Beyond



Myst. Luckily, it did this with style, by returning to the roots that made the series so great in the first place. A beautifully told story, stunning to look at and interact with, and video-acting that's actually half decent. Do something right with the remaining embers of your otherwise worthless life and buy this game.









Will's mistaken

delivery of 16,200 Knorr Vie Shots, the carrot and fruit drink of champions: Saving: £10,206

Prezzer's mother-in-law winning on the **Euro Millions: Saving: £44.50**

Suzy getting a refund from BT Broadband:

Saving: £6 per month

A RARE BEAST indeed is the budget game that scores higher than its earlier full-price incarnation. Maybe we were a touch harsh on Pacific Fighters when it first arrived. It's not as though we're awash with top-notch flight simulators on the PC anymore. It's not like we're awash with any kind of flight simulator on the PC anymore. And PF wasn't



exactly a wingless wonder. Far from it. From the same hangar as the highly regarded IL-2 series, it contains all of the authenticity, all of the finesse and all of the passion for its subject as its predecessors.

Our only complaint then, was that we'd seen it all before by this point, but to be fair, that's hardly Pacific Fighters'



fault. It can only simulate what there was to simulate after all, and it does it with aplomb. And a bomb. Ho ho (you'll forgive an old flier the occasional touch

of aviation humour). Top-notch flight simming and the best modding community out there. To the skies!



CSI: DARK MOTIVES PUBLISHER Focus Multimedia WEBSITE csi.elevated.to PRICE £9.99

TO BE MORE honest than a sodium pentothal-injected agent being quizzed on the latest deployment of NATO forces along the West German border, I've only ever watched one episode of any of the CSI programmes. And that just seemed to be 40 minutes of people dusting a speedboat for flecks of blood, then five minutes of that red-headed bloke who used to be on NYPD Blue telling a small child that his dead mummy would have been proud of him for identifying the killer (meaning they didn't need the forensics after all, rendering the whole show null and void). I then switched over to watch Lovejoy on UK Gold which was much better and had a sub-plot about Tinker and a fake Chippendale table leg.

Anyway, I'm slightly losing the plot here. Dark Motives takes all the 'fun' of conducting an autopsy and makes it interactive. Then it makes you question some rendered heads about a fictitious murder, and then it finishes. You'll

probably get the same enjoyment from staring at the telly and pressing buttons on your remote at random.





BRIGHT lights,

tiny city.

ALEXANDER

PUBLISHER Focus Multimedia WEBSITE www.alexander-thegame.com/uk PRICE £9.99



IT'S QUITE THE month for officially licensed games, eh? (What, two? Hardly a flood - Ed) Quiet. Alexander is based on the massive blockbuster (ahem) that was the Colin Farrell-starring historical romp and is surely the only game in history that has any kind of connection with Angelina Jolie. (What about Tomb Raider? Ed) I said be quiet. Certainly the only RTS anyway.



And what an RTS it is! Phenomenally poor. Rome: Total War is the obvious influence (well, actually an easy exploitation of a momentary popular piece of popular culture in order to make pots of cash is the most obvious

influence...) but it can't hold an elephant's tusk to that particular epic. Instead you get an unresponsive, tactics-free mess of a game that really should be ignored.





YOU DO

out? Think you can do better? Yeah? Put your money where your mouth is and send us a review of a recently released game and if it's good enough, we'll print it here. If it's woefully tragic, we might print it anyway and ridicule you in front of the whole nation. Keep your reviews between 100-150 words if you don't want us to chop bits out randomly and ruin your prose, and make sure you provide us with a score out of 100 and your full name and contact details. Oh, and each and every single review printed wins a PC ZONE goodie bag, which aren't available in any shops.

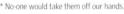
yourshout@pczone.co.uk, with

send them to: PC ZONE, Your Shout, Future, 99 Baker St, London, W1U 6FP.

REVIEWS! Think our reviews stink the place

Send your reviews to: Your Shout' in the subject line.

Or use pen and paper and



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3: SOAKED!

OUR SCORE: 79%

Most expansion packs add more of the same and rarely improve on problems from the original game, but Soaked! is different. It adds the ability to build swimming pools, water slides and a pile of other new rides. The pools add a great deal to the original game, you can design them from scratch and they look amazing too, with excellent water physics on display. There've been numerous other cosmetic additions, but the peep AI has been improved and it's now easier to see what they want thanks to the revamped 'thoughts' panel. The interface may still be confusing to beginners, but if you liked RollerCoaster Tycoon 3, this is essential. Paul Hoey: 84%



WORMS 4: MAYHEM

OUR SCORE: 80%

Why take a few hundred words to review a game when you only need a few? Take the recent review of Worms 4: Mayhem. Very clever the way the review mentions the evolution of worming by saying it's pointless to mention it. Anyway, to get to the point: Worms 4: Mayhem is simple, fun and addictive and will probably stay on my hard drive longer than Half-Life 2.

Doom 3 or indeed F.E.A.R.. The camera angles are still a bit dodgy, but that's about my only gripe.

Darren Rees: 85%

Review of the Month



ACT OF WAR

OUR SCORE: 84%

Do you like explosions? Really big explosions? Now imagine one so large that it'd be like the morning after visiting every curry house in your area. Act Of War has these explosions and more! The game is about as old school as RTS games go, but that's not a bad thing. A combined tank and infantry rush always seems like the best option and infantrymen can damage tanks, but this is overlooking the fact that Act Of War is massively fun. Little details that make you smile are many, such as the ability to medevac your troops to the nearby hospital or to capture and interrogate the enemy. Plus, the storyline and cut-scenes had me in stitches. It's proof that it's not the formula of the old-style games that's the problem, it's the lack of developer ideas. Daniel Holmes: 87%

Do you like really big explosions? Act Of War has these and more!



BRIAN LARA INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2005

OUR SCORE: 68%

The Ashes are on, so I thought I'd give this a go – and I reckon you underrated Lara. Yes, cricket is tricky to recreate on the computer, but this is fast, fun and even cricket novices will find their way around in no time. As good as cricket gets on a PC. Oliver Hall: 81%



GUILD WARS

OUR SCORE: 94%

Sure, you might not have to pay a monthly subscription, but that's about the only thing I liked about Guild Wars. All the usual MMO rubbish - boring and repetitive quests, pointlessly random combat with no skill involved, no reason to do anything other than to level up. I was expecting more, frankly.

Gary Hatcher: 58%



CAN YOU LEAD THE BATTLE AND LIVE TO TELL THE TALE







In the unforgiving world of Dungeon Siege II, your quest is to take revenge on the evil tyranny that has engulfed your land. Assemble an elite party of warriors, build their skills, adopt exotic creatures and battle seamlessly across the scarred land of Aranna. Whether you go it alone or choose a multi-player campaign, in this epic sequel to the million-selling Dungeon Siege, the fate of this intense real-time chronicle is in your hands.

www.microsoft.com/uk/dungeonsiege2





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BUYER'S GUIDE



The best that money can buy, but enough about us. Here are some great games too...

TOP 5 GAMES WITH CRAZY PARACHUTE JUMPS

- O JOINT OPERATIONS: PCZ ISSUE: 151
- PCZISSUE: 157
- AMERICA'S ARMY
 PCZ ISSUE: 121
- O NO ONE LIVES FOREVER PCZ ISSUE: 98
- G GRAND THEFT AUTO: PCZ ISSUE: 155

TOP 5 **MMO GAMES**

- WORLD OF WARCRAFT
 PCZ ISSUE: 152
- PCZ ISSUE: 150
- G GUILD WARS PCZ ISSUE: 156
- **EVE ONLINE** PCZ ISSUE: 130
- CITY OF HEROES
 PCZ ISSUE: 155



TOP 5 UNKNOWN SPORTSMEN-BRANDED GAMES

- HUNTER DAN'S BOWFISHING SURVIVAL GAUNTLET
- 2 SAMMY SOSA SOFTBALL SLAM
- WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED FEATURING SHAUN MURRAY
- FUZZY'S WORLD OF MINIATURE SPACE GOLF
- FRANK THOMAS BIG

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL PCZ Issue: 138.-89%

We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hillys is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.



BLACK & WHITE PCZ Issue: 100 - 95%

It's had its critics, but we still It's had its critics, but we still rate it as one of the most important PC titles of recent years. With its creatures, its miracle-making and its name-whispering oddities, for scope and vision there's not much to match Molyneux's vision.



BROTHERS IN ARMS PCZ Issue: 153 - 87%

We love Brothers In Arms for its alternate approach to WWII first-person shooting and hide 'n' flank factics. We expect more from the sequel, but still thoroughly enjoy our BIA ambles through war torn Normandy.



CALL OF DUTY PCZ Issue: 136 - 94%

The definitive war-shooter, full of bombast, brutality and the rare FPS feeling that every bullet counts. It manages to conjure up feelings of awe, exhilaration and real fear – shooters rely get this raw



CIVILIZATION III PCZ Issue: 111 - 86%

What buyer's guide omits Meier's masterpiece? The Civilization series has been the backbone of PC gaming for years – they're simply the most addictive, compulsive and overtly playable strategy



CITY OF HEROES PCZ Issue: 155 - 86%

Nothing beats the feeling of spandex and fire-beam shooting from your eyes.
This super-powered MMO
lets you live all those heroid
fantasies to the full, along with your mates. Nietzsche would have a field day.

Must buy!



HALF-LIFE 2 PCZ Issue: 148 - 97%

Everyone knew this would be good, but no-one quite expected the tour de force that Valve managed to pull off. Easily a contender for the best game of all time, Half-Life 2 is just one stunning set-piece after another, and is guaranteed to leave you dribbling with awe. Be warned though, an online connection is needed for Valve's mandatory Steam online delivery service.



DEUS EX

PCZ Issue: 93 - 94% PLC Issue: 93 - 94%
This remains the benchmark
in FPS role-players. Weaving,
twisting sci-fi plots, exciting
freeform level designand
some moments of pure
exhilaration and drama help
retain Deus Ex as the Alpha
male of the gaming world.



DOOM 3

PLZ Issue: 146 – 90% Highly polished entry into the Doom triptych that put off many with its back-to-basics corridor-upon-corridor approach. It's relentless, but it's also a great game – full of thrills, monsters and knowing nods to id's back catalogue.



THE ELDER SCROLLS

III: MORROWIND
PCZ Issue: 116 – 94%

PLC Issue: ITO – 949% Possibly the most intimidating, yet wonderful game we've played in the past few years – the breadth and depth of Morrowind remains a remarkable achievement.



EVE ONLINE

EVE ONLINE
PCZ Issue: 130 – 88%
Elite online has been a long-held gaming fantasy and this multiplayer space sim is the closest yet to making it a reality. Its slow pace belies the amount of options on offer, from mining or trading to piracy – it's up to you.



EVERQUEST II

PCZ Issue: 150 – 95%
A Star Trek to World Of
Warcraft's Star Wars, EQII
gives the original 3D MMO a
much needed lick of paint, a
whole new world to play in
and a greater sense of depth
and immersion. A time-sink in
the true, classic sense.



PCZ Issue: 159 - 90%

Murder most foul, with you as the killer, this twisting, turning, brilliantly told plot features multiple character control, split-screen tension branching scenes and seven endings. From the brains behind The Nomad Soul.



FAR CRY

PCZ Issue: 140 - 93%

In many eyes, Crytek's shooter outweighs even the mighty Half-Life 2 in its tension, tactics and expansive level design. It's a mighty achievement with seemingly freeform action and the best spinion moreous can buy. sniping money can buy



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005

PCZ Issue: 149 - 90%

PLC Issue: 149 – 90% Now rid of the Champ Man tag, Sports Interactive has continued to ladle goodness upon goodness into Football Manager – and it remains the premium creator of late-night manage-athons.



GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS PCZ Issue: 155 - 92%

To think that the simple top-down car game has turned into this – a work of creative genius. Violent, brutal, smutty, freeform and hilarious – San Andreas is the summit of

Must buy!



POME: TOTAL WAR PCZ Issue: 148 - 93%

Once upon a time, all strategy games were visual abortions and strictly for the hardcore (OK, a bit of a sweeping statement). But Rome: Total War (and its predecessors) changed all that, mixing a breathtaking 3D engine with troop numbers reminiscent of a Hollywood epic, as well as a staggering degree of historical accuracy. The result is a certified masterpiece and a strategy game just about anyone can enjoy, Hell, how many other games are made into TV shows?



GROUND CONTROL II: **OPERATION EXODUS**

PCZ Issue 143 - 84%

Despite a few AI glitches GCII is a great game if you prefer tactics to boring old resource management. A superb sci-fi effort with some intense freeform missions. Strat-fans should check it out.



GUILD WARS

PCZ Issue: 156 - 94%

A lesson in how to make an impenetrable gaming genre (MMOs) accessible to the masses. It shines with polish thought and lack of monthly subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home too, thanks to a totally skills-based setup.



JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING

PCZ Issue: 145 - 83%

If snipers piss you off then don't bother, but there's fun aplenty to be found in Novalogic's online shooter, with games of up to 150 soldiers zooming over some massive mans. massive maps.



KNIGHTS OF THE **OLD REPUBLIC**

PCZ Issue: 137 – 94%

ROTOR is the best Star Wars game (and indeed RPG) of recent years. Moving, dramatic and surprisingly adult in tone, it also has a hefty dose of lightsabers to keep you happy.



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH PCZ Issue: 149 - 91%

Although the LOTR RTS doesn't hold a candle to the Total War franchise, there's nothing quite like ordering a Balrog around for guaranteed strategy fun.



MAX PAYNE 2: THE **FALL OF MAX PAYNE** PCZ Issue: 136 - 93%

The chosen poison for certain PCZ staffers after a long hard day, Payne's second outing is perhaps the most pixel-perfect example of



NEVERWINTER

PCZ Issue: 118 - 91%

It may not have the depth of Fallout, but the customisation Fallout, but the customisation options in this are so extensive that it's been granted arrextremely long life on the Interweb. Still a wonderfully immersive game.



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

PCZ Issue: 86 – 87%

Planescape is the definitive PC isometric RPG. PC isometric RPG. Compelling storylines, great characterisation and a heart of pure darkness – the best thing Interplay's Black Isle Studios ever gave us



PLANETSIDE

PCZ Issue: 131 - 82%

The dream was always of a The dream was always of a massively multiplayer war, and PlanetSide's attempts to make it real offer some of the most intense future war action ever. True, there are plenty of irksome niggles, but when it works. but when it works.



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME PCZ Issue: 136 - 84%

Maybe we're not manly enough, but we still prefe POP's first outing. No, the combat isn't up to much, but the warmth, wisdom and charming inter-character banter far exceeds its sequel.



PRO EVOLUTION

PC7 Issue: 149 - 89% The finest arcade football

gamer ever. Fact. No other game even comes close. game even comes close. Bringing bile, tears, joy and rapture to PCs up and down the country, it's the definitive soccer sim.



PSYCHONAUTS

PCZ Issue: 156 - 90%

Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and absolutely off its detailed and absolutely off its rocker – Psychonauts is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling tour de force.



RISE OF NATIONS

PCZ Issue: 129 - 90%

One of the best of the 'last eneration' of Empire generation of Empire builders, Rise Of Nations – coupled with exemplary expansion pack Thrones And Patriots – is a uniquely satisfying and addictive treatment of the Civ genre.





BATTLEFIELD 2

PCZ Issue: 157 - 94%

If it's online action you want, look no further. BF2 sets the gold standard for team-based shooting. Everything that made the original BF1942 so good has been that made the original B+1942 so good has been retained – the map design, vehicles, ever-evolving frontline etc – then mixed with huge 64-player maps, squad commands and commander modes, and a contemporary setting that gives everything a feeling of weight and importance. Truly the best of the best.



SID MEIER'S PIRATES! PCZ Issue: 149 - 88%

PCZ Issue: 149 – 88% If you've got some downtime at the close of the day, then Pirates! is the most relaxing (and swashbuckling) game around. Drifting around the Caribbean with a flotilla of ships and mischief on your mind is escapism at its finest.



SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY PCZ Issue 154 - 91%

A tour de force from Ubisoft, Chaos Theory takes the Splinter Cell format and runs with it in solo, co-op and the now well established spies vs mercs multiplayer. Smooth, mercs multiplayer. Smooth lithe and good with a knife



SWAT 4

PCZ Issue: 154 – 86%

SWAT 4 is a tactical squad shooter that sings. Dark in places, brutal in others, it's the only shooter that allows you to tazer old ladies and drown them in pepper spray. Probably the best co-op experience around to boot.



THE SIMS 2

PCZ Issue: 147 - 82%

PLC Issue: 147 – 82% Even the most churlish of gamers couldn't grant The Sims recognition of both gaming cleverness and achievement. Mass-market it may be, and as unlikely as we are to play it, it still deserves a place in the Buyer's Guide.



THE SHEEFDING

THE SUFFERING
PCZ Issue: 145 – 84%
An absolute revelation when it came up for review; the darkness, the shocks and the ingenious set-pieces made The Suffering's decayed prison a necessary play for those who want a taste of violence.



TRIBES: VENGEANCE

PCZ Issue 147 - 87%

A slick, novel game that we love due to its clever and immaculately conceived jetpack ir gun solo campaign. Multiplayer servers aren't as populated as they might be, but this remains an overlooked gem.



THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS

SHADOWS
PCZ Issue: 144 – 85%
Deadly Shadows not only
brings Thief's sneak-and-steal
mantra bang up-to-date, but
also has some of the best
level design in living memory.
Play through The Cradle and
you'll know true fear.



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004 PCZ Issue: 138 - 91%

UT2004 packs so much punch, you'd be hard pushed to find a flaw. Team garnes, deathmatches, tactical thinking in the Onslaught mode – everything the sci-fi shoot 'em up fan could want.



WORLD OF WARCRAFT PCZ Issue: 152 - 95%

PCZ Issue: 152 – 95% Blizzard's recreation of the classic strategy world in MMO form doesn't disappoint. Beautiful to look at, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake an enchanted shitty stick at.



PCZ Issue: 138 - 92%

PCZ Issue: 138 – 92% Mesmerising in its detail and beauty, XZ is the best modern-day Elite that the gaming world has managed to produce. More than a little intimidating to the casual gamer, the scope for exploration seems limitless.

INCOMING!

All approximate monthly dates are correct at the time of going to press

October

BLACK	& WHIT	E2			
BROTH	HERS IN	RMS: E	ARNED	IN BL	OOD
PRO E	VOLUTIO	N SOCC	ER 5		
SPELL	FORCE II:	BLEND	OF PER	FECT	ION

UBISOFT KONAMI JOWOOD

November

STARSHIP TROOPERS

CALL OF DUTY 2	ACTIVISION
HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE	E/
PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG	UBISOFT
PRINCE OF PERSIA 3	UBISOFT
RISE & FALL: CIVILIZATIONS AT WAR	MIDWAY
THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO	ATAR
THE MOVIES	ACTIVISION
	The second secon

03 2005

The second secon	
X3: REUNION	DEEP SILVER
HALF-LIFE 2: AFTERMATH	VALVI
SERIOUS SAM 2	2K GAMES
STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT II	ACTIVISION
STUBBS THE ZOMBIE	ASPYR

04 2005

AGE OF EMPIRES III	MICROSOFT
AUTO ASSAULT	NCSOFT
CITY OF VILLAINS	NCSOFT
SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION IV	2K GAMES
ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION	2K GAMES
GHOST RECON: ADVANCED WARFIGHTER	UBISOFT
GT LEGENDS .	10TACLE STUDIOS
LULA 3D	CDV
OUAKE 4	ACTIVISION
SIN: EPISODES	VALVE/STEAM
VIETCONG 2	2K GAMES

2006

2006	
BATTLESTATIONS: MIDWAY	EIDOS
BIOSHOCK	TBA
COMPANY OF HEROES	THQ
CONDEMNED: CRIMINAL ORIGINS	SEGA
CRASHDAY	ATARI
DESPERADOS 2: COOPER'S REVENGE	ATARI
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ONLINE: STORMREACH	ATARI
ENEMY IN SIGHT	ATARI
ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS	AÇTIVISION
EVIL DEAD: REGENERATION	THQ
LOTR: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH II	EA
JUST CAUSE	EIDOS
HAMMER & SICKLE	CDV
HEART OF EMPIRE: ROME	DEEP SILVER
HELLGATE: LONDON	NAMCO
HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY	EIDOS
HOTEL GIANT	JOWOOD
GOTHIC 3	JOWOOD
NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2	ATARI
PARAWORLD	JOWOOD
PHANTASY STAR UNIVERSE	SEGA
PREY	TAKE 2
RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS	MICROSOFT
SCARFACE: THE WORLD IS YOURS	· VU GAMES
SPORE	EA
STALKER: SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL	THQ
SUPREME COMMANDER	THQ
STAR WARS: EMPIRE AT WAR	ACTIVISION
TABULA RASA	NCSOFT
THE GODFATHER	EA
TIMESHIFT	ATARI
TOCA RACE DRIVER 3	CODEMASTERS
TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND	EIDOS
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2007	MIDWAY



PCZNNE

ARDWARE

Better gaming through technology

HARDWARE EDITOR Phil Wand

Up all night

HE MAPLIN WEBSITE is really rather nifty. Shiny products, well laid out, oozing gadgetry for the likes of you and me. What's more, like an increasing number of retailers, it shows stock levels for each product so you don't go ordering something that's not in the warehouse. Unlike most retailers, Maplin shows you how many shoppers have added products to their baskets - if there are 48 widgets in the stockroom, and 46 of them are in trolleys, it means you need to get your skates on.

Anyway, it's 4am and I'm hunting around for a USB to DMX converter. Lo and behold, the Maplin site says there are four in stock, one of which is in someone else's basket. My first thought is one of relief, knowing that at least one other person is abnormal enough to shop for niche widgets rather than take the traditional route of sleep. So I add one to the basket, go through the motions with my credit card and retire to bed.

In the morning there's an email telling me that my order has been processed. That's great. Later in the day, there's a further email with 'Despatch Notification' as the subject. I don't even read it, I'm just superchuffed that Maplin is so efficient. I am blessed.

Later in the week, when my widget has failed to show up, a re-read of Maplin's last email revealed that the product wasn't despatched at all because it wasn't in stock. As a result, I've sent Maplin an email with 'Retailer Award Notification' as the subject - telling the company it hasn't actually won.

MAINSTREAM MAESTRO

ATI plays the GT game

IF YOU WERE looking to build yourself a system around our favourite GeForce 6600 GT, think again. With a 475MHz core, 256MB DDR3 RAM and a price point of little more than a ton, the new Radeon X800 GT is cheaper than PC ZONE's mainstream champion and yet is significantly faster.

Although a full review is an issue away, preliminary tests with a PCI-Express PowerColor card show that the ATI newcomer is 10 per cent or more rapid in every benchmark. Generally speaking, any X800 GT will be faster than its 6600 GT counterpart, but the reason the PowerColor variant wins so convincingly is because it

uses a later R480-based core - overclocking beyond 500MHz would not be a stretch.

There are now only two reasons for you to stick with the older NVIDIA card. The first is that silent, passively-cooled variants of the GeForce are plentiful, such as the Buyer's Guide favourite from GIGABYTE. The second is that the 6600 GTs all support Shader Model 3.0, whereas the X800 GTs do not. However, there's no reason to demand SM3.0 features from a £100 middle-powered card.

The R480 PowerColor card is available now from www.microdirect.co.uk for a bargain £111.

NEWS ROUND-UP

Confused by Intel's processors names? You just wait. The company is expected to adopt a new measure of electronic prowess: performance per watt. Having always championed more hertz, the chip giant will shift to promoting power efficiency and more generalised performance ratings. The change in direction has surprised no-one: it and rival AMD have been moving towards more efficient dual-core designs rather than stretching beyond 4GHz, and it's no secret that the ultimate goal is a small, silent device serving as the hub of your

THE X800 GT is a late

but welcome addition to the mainstream party.

Having been too honest about the too clever MX1000 (issue 152, 60%). Logitech seems to have excommunicated me and I was the last person to find out about the company's G5 laser mouse. On paper, it sounds better than the flagship MX: the wireless is gone, meaning it no longer weighs the same as canal boat and it's a little more easy to steer. But since I've not had my mitts round one I can't report on whether the lag issues

home. www.intel.com

have gone. Looks like I'll have to fork out £60 to find out. You can just go to www.logitech.co.uk

AND THEN THERE WERE 3

ViewSonic VX724 and VX924 quicker than you thought

BenQ was excited about its 5ms LCD flagship; ViewSonic trumped that with a duo of 4ms screens. And now, in a rather confusing statement, the American manufacturer has announced that its 4ms products were 3ms all along - only it never told anyone. Since the 17-inch VX724 and

> 19-inch VX924 were introduced, ViewSonic has noted the average response



time of every unit rolling off the production line, and is now confident enough to raise specifications to 3ms. If you have a VX724 or VX924, you may commence boasting to friends.

The company promises 2ms and 1ms screens are on the way. For more, head to www.viewsonic.co.uk



DUAL-CORE: Like hardcore but twice the fun. One up the bum, no harm done. EXTREME EDITION CPU: Top shelf material, £2.99 with laminated cover. TRUE-VU LIGHTING: Closing down sale. Bedside lamps and fluorescent strips going cheap. WIRED2FIRE PYRO: For all your arson needs. USB TO DMX CONVERTER: Device for converting three-letter abbreviations. Also suitable for acronyms. DDR3 RAM: One of those posh video recorders. PCI-EXPRESS: Calling at Milton Keynes Central, Coventry, Birmingham International, Birmingham New Street and Wolverhampton, where this service will terminate Currently available in the buffet car, from the four corners of the world: double-egg butty.

HARDWAREREVIE

EIGHTIES CHILD

Can the XWorks really be the worth all that lovely moolah?

You're probably asking how the X8i-SLIDC can be worth your consideration when it costs an epic £2,525. In the immortal words of Rolls-Royce salesmen everywhere, "If sir has to ask ...

What the XWorks offers is the best of everything for enthusiasts and wealthy gamers. People looking for something a bit low-key, a bit mysterious, a bit more techy than usual. The X8i-SLIDC has genuine heritage and is a real talking point -XWorks machines have helped programmers, animators and CAD designers develop countless PC and console chart-toppers for years. The Rolls-Royce metaphor really works

If you're still rubbing your wallet, take a longer look at the individual components and the price isn't so shocking. A GeForce 7800 GTX is the fastest video card on the market, setting you back at least £400 in a store. At £750, the Pentium Extreme Edition is almost twice as much again, and that's before we've counted the buckets of RAM and that epic flat-screen NEC.

SPECIFICATION

ASUS P5WD2 Premium motherboard, Intel Pentium D 840 Extreme Edition CPU, 2GB Patriot DDR-2 PC5300 RAM, NVIDIA GeForce 7800GTX 256MB, Intel HD 71 Audio (Onboard), Western Digital Raptor 74GB SATA (x2 RAID 0), Windows Digital Raptor 746B SATA (KZ RAID O), Windows XP Professional, Pioneer DVR-109 DVD+/-RW Drive includes NEC Multisync 19-inch LCD197GGX. One year return-to-base warranty (three year ori-site next business day £125).

BENCHMARKS? You can find the full gory details on the discs. They're far too dull to print here!



YOU'VE NEVER HEARD of XWorks, but that's hardly a surprise. The company specialises in systems tailor-made for developers rather than players, and its workstations are bought by Europe's top games-makers. The X8i-SLIDC you see here is assembled on the same production line to the same standards, and gives home users the chance to buy the brand behind some of the best-known PC and console titles.

The specification wants for nothing. A dual-core Pentium Extreme Edition, GeForce 7800 GTX, 2GB PC5300 RAM, a striped Raptors twosome, eight-channel audio and our Buyer's Guide favourite NEC flat-screen. The case is a bit frumpy but it's the same one XWorks uses for its development systems. Build quality is faultless and it's as quiet as a mouse with a throat infection the only noise you hear is an occasional cough from the hard drives.

Benchmark results remain majestic rather than mind-boggling. The X8i-SLIDC

was slower than the Dell XPS 3.6 in Half-Life 2, and was behind the Wired2Fire Pyro in everything, but the Pyro has the help of two GeForce 6800 Ultras and comes tweaked from the box. If you double up with a second 7800 GTX, the XWorks rockets out front aggressive overclocking also pays big dividends and future driver upgrades will push things even further.

There are a couple of areas where the X8i-SLIDC could be improved (Athlon 64 FX aside). To start with, it doesn't need 2GB RAM. Halve that and there's no discernibledetriment to real-world performance, nor anything major to report in the benchmarks. It also doesn't need the 19-inch Multisync LCD, ravishing though it is, because none of its rivals come shipped with a screen. These two upgrades make the X8i-SLIDC look relatively expensive - if you delete them, the price becomes a lot less traumatising.

XWorks has made a fine PC, but one which lacks the external glamour of competitors like Alienware. Few people will look at the X8i-SLIDC and say, "Wow, that sure is one sexy computer!", but if a bewildering specification, reserved styling and an unquestionable pedigree mean anything to you, there's no other machine to consider.



ACK-5000HL

PRICE £46 MANUFACTURER KeySonic PHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.keysonic.de

UNLIKE ITS BRUSHED metal sibling, the ACK-5000HL is made of fingerprintattracting plastic and offers two USB ports on either side of the base, meaning you can plug in your mouse, then cock your wrist and pretend to be a Mac user. Like the ACK-720EL, the keyboard is short on travel but has enough resistance to make typing easy. Each key is mounted on a rubber membrane rather than a mechanical

switch which takes some getting used to.

The biggest gripe with the ACK-5000HL is the illumination. The keys are semitranslucent and the transfers are white; the blue light is so strong that at night it throws everything else into relief. You can still see the keys, but you have no idea which one is which. It's far easier to turn the illumination off and use the glow of your monitor – the white transfers are then easy to pick out.





prefer a more old-fashioned mechanical action, and regularly type at over 120 words-per-

The good thing about the ACK-720EL is

minute, you're better off with the Saitek.

- no multimedia keys nor similar

obvious choice for gamers.

gimcrackery. However, the constraints

it puts on your fingers means it's not an

PHONE 020 7309 0127 WEBSITE www.saitek.com/uk

THE ECLIPSE IS essentially a fine-tuned Saitek Gaming Keyboard (issue 153, 95%) without the command pad. It offers the same solid feel, hushed operation and individual styling, but comes in a more appealing black moulding and features True-Vu keys - the decals are laser-etched to allow the light to shine through them. The light gets a little patchy in places, but it's the easiest board to use at night. It's

Perhaps the most refreshing aspect of the Eclipse is that, like its predecessor, it's a no-nonsense, high-quality product. The keys are so quiet and so smooth they feel as though they're cushioned by hydraulics; together with the True-Vu lighting, it's ideal for night gaming. There are also no multimedia keys you won't use cluttering the layout. The one complaint is that the support brackets don't tip the keyboard quite high enough.





result of an alliance between Raptor Gaming and Cherry, the latter often being associated with high-quality keyboards. But while the K1 is small, robust and features low-resistant gold contacts, it's laughably noisy. Remember the IBM 5100 machines that used to litter 1970s sci-fi movies? It makes that old clickety-clack sound and people have to shout when you're typing. A curious marketing gimmick is the

Not only do you have to use the supplied extraction tool to remove and insert them, but they're a lot taller than the normal keys. You also get eight braces for locking out individual keys, but when annoyances such as the Windows Key can be disabled with a registry hack, the braces are just something else to lose. Oh, and the price. Please.

HOW TO...

SECURE YOUR PC

Like Massive Attack, Phil Wand is big on protection...



RIMINALS ARE LURKING on the Internet. They want control of your PC, and they're coming up with ever more devious ways of getting it. If you're lucky, they'll just reduce it to a spam-spewing zombie, so full of malware it's barely capable of

functioning. If you're unlucky, you could find your identity has been stolen and you have to live out the rest of your life in a twilight world where nobody knows your name.

If you're the kind of person who's too busy (or too damn cool) to worry about computer security, you have three choices: look the other way and hope the bullies pick on someone else, disconnect from the Internet and retire to a hole in your garden, or follow our five simple steps to a more secure PC. It's an easy choice, right?

Realise that the Internet is not a safe place for the unwary

You can't get away with thinking computer security is someone else's problem. If you connect an unprotected PC to the Internet, on average it'll last 12 minutes before the first virus infects it. Today's Internet bad-guys are constantly probing every computer on the Internet, looking for a way in, and tens of thousands of machines are added to their long list of victims every day. Don't be one of them.





Malware is the name given to software that does something nasty. There are different kinds, depending on how the software spreads and what kinds of dastardly deeds it gets up to. A worm is anything that can spread itself from computer to computer: if it damages machines on the way, it's a virus. If a program requires you to click on it before it revs up, it's usually a Trojan.

...& WORSE

Spyware and Adware exist in a semi-legit twilight zone, where they may provide some seemingly useful function such as 'speeding up your connection' or helping you search. Adware, however, will interfere with your browsing by adding extra adverts and Spyware will transmit your personal information, such as your browsing habits, to a remote computer. Lovely then.





If your password is a word (like 'mittens'), there are programs that will guess it in seconds. So here's a tip: use one password for all the piddling Web forums you don't care about, and more security-conscious passwords for your important accounts. To make them memorable but hard to guess, try using the first letters of the words in a memorable phrase. "We are the cheeky girls/Ooh aah, touch my bum" becomes WATCGOATMB. See what I'm doing there? I'm the first person to harness the catchiness of bargain-basement novelty pop and use it for good rather than evil.

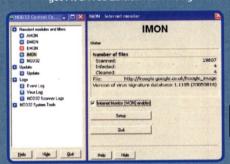
02 Get a firewall

A firewall is your first line of defence against computers that try to connect to your PC and infect it, and malicious software that tries to send personal information out from your computer. Recent updates to Windows XP have added a software firewall that helps a lot. It can ban incoming connections and make sure that outgoing connections are only made by programs you trust. Just make sure it's turned on. If you have several computers at home, buy a hardware firewall.



OB Anti-everything

Now that there are more kinds of attack threatening your computer, security software has become smarter. In addition to finding and removing viruses, most antivirus software scans emails, Web pages and downloaded files for malicious content. Many packages like NOD32 also protect you from spyware, and some like Norton come with their own firewall. Skinflints can get AVG Free Edition from free.grisoft.com; Trend Micro offers



a free virus check online at housecall. trendmicro.com; and get spyware tool Ad-Aware from Lavasoft at www.lavasoft.com.

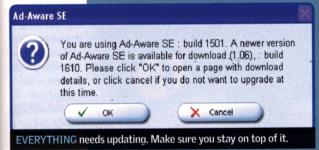
NEED an antivirus tool? Get NOD32.

04 Stay up-to-date

Software is flawed, and some flaws can be exploited to gain entry to your PC. When a hole is found, hackers race to create viruses that exploit it, and you too must race to protect yourself. If your software isn't patched, your PC is vulnerable to attack. Antivirus software must be updated for a different reason: each new update contains descriptions of the latest viruses so they can be identified and removed. If your antivirus program is out of date, you may as well uninstall it.



Guard your identity



Hackers want your passwords. Recently, they've discovered that a good way to get them is simply to ask you for them. In what's known as a phishing attack, they send fake emails pretending to be from your bank, inviting you to click on a link and enter your details. What you need to remember is:

- Emails asking you to confirm your details are fake.
- Before entering your password on a website, check you can see the padlock icon at the bottom
- Type the address of your bank into your browser and don't click links.

WΗΔ

No problems, you worked it all out without scratching your head and turning purple? Well done you. For everyone else...

X I've installed a firewall and now can't play games.

🗸 Some software requires that you to make an exception in your firewall's settings in order to work properly. If an application stops working when you add a firewall, look in the manual or help file. Do NOT turn the firewall off.

🚺 I think my computer might be infected. Strange things keep happening...

On't use the machine to connect to the Internet. Buy yourself an antivirus program like NOD32, install it and clean your machine. Start using Mozilla Firefox for browsing rather than Internet Explorer.

Can you give me your PayPal password?

It's the name of the football team I support, which you would know if you visited my blog.

HARDWAREDEARWANDY



DEAR WANDY

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...



ve all got them you know Up to your neck in debt? Partner sleeping around? A propensity to wake up on Saturday morning not knowing what the hell happened? We can't help with any of those (but if you know the answers, let us know), but we can solve all of your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything and is willing to help if you email him at wandy@dearwandy.com, including as much information as necessary and system specs where applicable.

INTERFACE OFF

I'm looking to upgrade my system from an Athlon XP 2600+ on an ASUS A7N8X-E Deluxe with GeForce 5900 XT. What I'd like to know is, should I go for a fast Athlon 64 chip on an AGP or PCI-Express board? The former allows me to use my existing card, the latter allows me to buy a newer card like the GeForce 6600 GT. I have about £300 to spend. Any help would be very much appreciated. Is it worth going for an SLI board?

Lee Cole

Unless you're working to a really tight budget, and you're not, there's no point investing in yesterday's technology. Ever. Your £300 fund will buy all our Buyer's Guide favourites - the ASUS A8N-E nForce4 motherboard, the AMD Athlon 64 3000+ processor and GIGABYTE's tearaway 6600 GT variant, the GV-NX66T128VP Turbo Force. There's nothing else I'd rather have for the money. When making your

choice, you also

T might be a bit pricey, but

the Driving Force Pro is

worth the cash.

need to consider that NVIDIA won't be offering its stunning 7 Series with an AGP interface, which puts a big crimp on upgrade options in the future. On the other hand, ATI will be providing AGP versions of its new flagship R520 product, but since it will also offer PCI-E, any argument for not choosing the newer, better technology is a weak one.

As for SLI, I remain to be convinced. While two GeForce 6800 Ultra cards working in parallel produce some record scores in synthetic benchmarks. the real-world benefits aren't nearly so breathtakina, and two GeForce 6600 GT are almost disappointing. By all means get an SLI board, but I'll bet you your £300 budget that you'll never get round to filling the second slot.

HAND THROTTLE

Many thanks for your round-up of steering wheels in issue 158. I'm hoping you can help me though. I'm physically disabled, and

while my hand-to-

eye co-ordination is fine, the movement in my lower limbs is limited. So I'm after a wheel - Force Feedback would be nice with which I can accelerate and brake using my hands, perhaps using the gearshift paddles? Does such a beast exist?

Dale Wilks

*I know that Live For Speed (issue 158, 90%) enables you to configure buttons as the throttle and brake. I only just discovered this; each time I go back to the game I like it more. If you went for the Logitech Driving Force Pro (issue 158, 93%), you can use the paddle shifts or the stick to change gear while keeping your finger on the PlayStation-style button arrangement for throttle and brake. One of the benefits of the Swiss wheel is that it has an inordinate amount of button combinations to choose from - for example, you could use the up/down of the hat switch for accelerate/brake and use left/ right for shift up/shift down. This is quite tricky for an average player, but assuming your upper limb dexterity is better than most, you'll be fine. The only downside is the Driving Force Pro's high price.



GRAPHICS

CATALYST 5.7 15-JUL-05 FORCEWARE 77.72 22-JUN-05

MANUFACTURER DESC M-Audio REVO'N 1.0.2.8 **FIRE CONTROL** I have a problem. All online games say that you should turn your firewall off. But does this not mean you're open to hackers? I was told never to turn the firewall off when you're online. Or does being in a server

> protect you? David **Brophy**

Some games

suggest you deactivate your firewall in order to troubleshoot a networking problem, in the same way that some games suggest

you deactivate your anti-virus to work around an installation problem, but to say that all games ask you to turn it off is exaggerating just a bit.



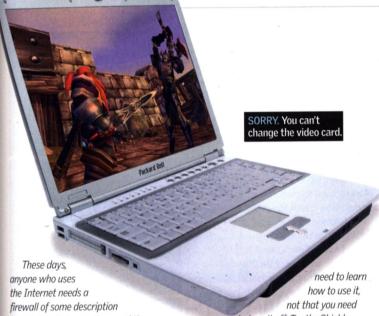
SOUND

RELEASED AUDIGY 2 1.84.55 12-MAY-05 13-FEB-04

By all means get an SLI board, but I bet you your £300 budget that you'll never fill the second slot

Is Lee Cole man enough to take the bet?





somewhere between them and the outside world. It can be a software-based firewall, like the one Microsoft built into Windows XP Service Pack 2, or it can be a hardware-based solution, like those found inside many of today's broadband routers. Some are extremely configurable, some are extremely basic, but anything is better than nothing. Don't go turning it off unless you understand what you might be letting yourself in for.

Being connected to a server does not protect you in any way - there is no 'magic tunnel' set up between your computer and the game online, deflecting unwanted data when you're playing. If anything, playing online puts you at greater risk. Most games servers aren't regulated or policed in any way, and games servers will display your IP address to any admins who request it. If you have a modem connected directly to your PC via a USB port you're particularly at risk, and I would go as far as to say that I would rather not play the game than not use the firewall.

Yes, sometimes it's a pain in the arse. Its job is to intercept network data and block unwanted traffic - on occasion it will block wanted traffic, but that just means you

to turn it off. Try the Shields Up! system at www.grc.com to get an idea what people can get up to when they know your IP, and keep that

SHORT AND SWEET

firewall activated.

I have a Packard Bell EasyNote H5 laptop which is good for games except for the 64MB NVIDIA graphics. I really need to upgrade it and need some help as to what I can get.

Miles Chapman

Alas, your video card is integrated with the motherboard and you can't upgrade it. Unlike a desktop PC, there are no slots for you to drop in a spanking new Radeon or GeForce. Simple as that.

PENTI-HUMP

Last night my PC decided to stop working, so I started thinking about buying a new AGP motherboard. I checked your Buyer's Guide and found that all the recommendations were for AMD processors. Not a single one for an Intel

CPU! While I'd agree that the Athlons outperform the Pentiums, it doesn't help me. Could you give me any buying tips for a socket 478, 3.0GHz Prescott?

Darren Bellinger

good, solid board and

a reasonable price.

50 UTILITIES YOU HAVE TO USE BEFORE YOU DIE

2 ACRONIS TRU

EXPECT TO PAY \$49 (about £28)

www.acronis.com Before there was True Image, there was nothing. Well, OK, there was PowerQuest Drive Image and Norton Ghost, but these were a bit cumbersome and nobody really liked them. Using them to back up a hard drive was such a complicated task that not many people bothered, and using them to migrate to a new machine was so timeconsuming that hardly anyone even considered it. When True Image turned up, it instantly made two of the trickiest jobs in home computing very simple indeed.

If you wanted to clone your data from one hard disk to another, so you could put your existing Windows install inside a new machine, or move from a smaller hard drive to a larger one, all you had to do was click a button. The image was created while you waited. If you wanted to back up your whole hard disk, all you had to do was choose the disk and select where you wanted it saved. Easy as that. You could store it somewhere on your

1 2 × 8 4 4 4 8 8

TRUE Image replicates your hard disk in its entirety, making it the perfect way of backing up all your data or migrating stuff to a new PC.

network. You could even split the image file so it would copy to CD or DVD, or store the image on another machine on your network

What makes it my favourite back-up tool is the way it does all this unattended, allowing me to create regular, scheduled snapshots of my entire machine. If anything goes wrong, I have a complete PC on another hard disk. I can even mount that PC as a drive letter and browse the individual files.

It's nothing short of amazing and it's incredibly cheap. Buy it and get backing up.

Once screwed into place, most boards are indistinguishable. If you were to line up ten Intel-based desktop PCs, each with a different motherboard inside, you wouldn't be able to tell which one had what - it's only when you benchmark them to ten decimal places that variations become apparent. What's more important is value, stability and support. And for that I'd choose the £80 ABIT IC7. This board was a Buyer's Guide favourite for months on end because it was a feature-packed product at a very good price. You could go for the IC7-G MAX2 variant, but this has a lot of bells and whistles you'll never actually use.



I recently took a new laptop over to a friend's office. This was partly because the novelty had not yet worn off, but mostly because I could connect to his network and get him into trouble downloading hamster porn or something. When I arrived, a box popped up telling me the wireless network needed a security key. My friend comes over and starts typing his phone number. "Tell me that isn't your WEP key," I said. Turns out he's been using his phone number for more than a year. His response: "Doesn't everyone do that?" Help!



WATCHDOG

Rotten companies need sorting - and good ones need praising...

Here to help!

feel your voice is strong enough to shout down the suits? Email Suzy at letters@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog', or write to her at the address above. Pleased remember to include your name, address and contact number. and all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.



SCAN CLAN

Dave Edwards knows the pressures of being in a clan only too well. As well as the stress of team kills and competition ladders, his machine and its frame-rates were letting him down. Coming highly recommended, he opted for a Scan system and promptly spent a small fortune, only for graphics problems to crop up barely a couple of months later.

After trying the normal solutions with

no luck, the system was sent back to Scan, where it was promptly diagnosed as a faulty graphics card. Scan then informed Dave that his card was currently out of stock and that it was awaiting new supplies, but two weeks passed with no supplies arriving and so Scan offered to replace it with an equivalent card. A whole month had passed after the original went kaput and Dave was still card-less.

We got on the phone to Scan, who was only too happy to explain. "The main issue is that we've had a faulty card and it's been tough to

and indeed he was at the start, but it wasn't to last. After a mere seven weeks. the system refused to power on.

So, Mark packaged up the system and sent it back to Mesh for inspection. Eight days later, the company contacted Mark to say the system had been repaired, blaming the main drive, but telling him it had been "replaced, reformatted and it was now ready for delivery".

Feeling a bit dubious about the cause, Mark received his machine back and it worked like a dream. For all of six hours. What followed was a series of bizarre error messages that would make the average PC owner break out into a sweat, and a gradual diminishment of the PC's ability to do normal PC things, such as starting... Understandably, Mark's less than impressed.

After having the fear of god struck into us by the pictures of Mark's PC crashes, we quickly got in touch with Mesh. After checking the images sent by Mark, the company was in agreement that it was a hardware fault: "As such, we have arranged collection for today from the address specified. We have also confirmed we will not be charging him for carriage."

From this point, Mesh also confirmed that it would "collect the PC from a third party address as requested (not standard procedure), replace the parts under the warranty free of charge, compile a report of the problem and the parts replaced and

IF your PC starts delivering screens like this, be afraid, be very afraid...

arrange for a free Saturday delivery of his PC". Hopefully, Mark's PC will have been repaired and returned to him, minus scary blue screen of death problems by now.

Feeling dubious about the cause, Mark got his PC back and it worked like a dream. For all of six hours...



proven innocent

get the same replacement due to changes in supply chain and technology. We have offered the same product but a different brand to the customer in question. However, the customer is unhappy because the price of the replacement product is considerably lower. This is due to prices coming down as technology life cycles change."

Once that palaver had been sorted, Dave was sent a new card which was unfortunately damaged in transit. After another quick chat, Scan confirmed the returned card as faulty and promptly sent out the replacement card agreed upon, but only after it it had been personally tested by the technical manager. Now Dave's only hindrance will be the noobs online!

FEELING BLUE

Mark Francis should have been as happy as Larry when he got his new PC from Mesh -

SAINTS NOT SINNERS

Mark Webster has had his Microsoft wireless optical desktop for two years, so when the keyboard recently went pop, he knew the place of purchase would tell him where to stick it. So he tried Microsoft itself. Mark tells us: "Nice Microsoft Man: 'Have you tried reinstalling the drivers?' Me: 'Tried everything.' NMM: 'So it's broken then?' Me: 'Yup.' NMM: 'OK, we'll send you a new one'." A few days later a nice delivery man turned up with a box containing not only a new keyboard, but a whole new setup: keyboard, mouse and dongle. And not only was it all brand new, it was also a much nicer updated model. Mark concludes: "Hurrah for

Microsoft!" Indeed



Blimey! It's not often a company gets into Saints Not Sinners, but this will be the second time in three months for Plextor. Proving once again that its customer service is second to none, Adrian Abbott felt he had to let us know about his great experience. When his Plextor DVD drive suddenly stopped reading and writing DVDs properly, he contacted its support team. After exchanging serial numbers and drive info, Adrian went away, only to be woken two days later by a knock at the door. Sure enough it was a courier with his brand spanking new drive and he didn't even ask for his old one back. Well done Plextor.



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www.pipex.com



HARDWAREBUYER'SGUIDE



We are legally required to remind readers that money splashed on hardware may be better spent on families, wives and girlfriends. PC ZONE isn't liable for any estrangement that may ensue.

HARDWARE DIVIDE

The best on the market whether you're Lord of the Manor or a toiling slave to capitalism...

LOADED?

GRAPHICS

GEFORCE 7800 GTX

EXPECT TO PAY £399 MANUFACTURER XFX

WEBSITE www.xfxforce.co.uk

It's hard to imagine, but NVIDIA's GeForce 7800 GTX is more complex than your CPU. It has more rendering pipelines, more memory bandwidth and more grunt than any other video card on sale. The XFX version stands out as it comes bundled with Far Cry on DVD, plus X2: The Threat and MotoGP 2. If performance is the object it's the only card to buy, but do make sure your PSU is rated at 400W or more.



PROCESSOR

ATHLON 64 FX-57 EXPECT TO PAY

MANUFACTURER

WEBSITE www.amd.co.uk

For extreme performance, the flagship Athlon is the only processor to buy - even if it makes the same dent in your bank account as last month's mortgage payment. With AMD's new memory controller, unlocked multiplier and highest ever clock speed, the latest FX is the fastest thing inside any PC.



FATALITY ANS SLI EXPECT TO PAY

£130 MANUFACTURER

WEBSITE www.abit.com.tw

Designed specifically for gaming, the nForce4 SLI-based Fatallty AN8 supports all 939-pin AMD processors. As well as SLI support it features ABIT's Guru Panel, a front-mounted display unit for overclockers. The board also uses a bevy of ABIT features, including OTES cooling and AudioMAX 7.1 onboard audio.



RAPTOR

EXPECT TO PAY £118 MANUFACTURER

Western Digital WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

Travelling at 10,000rpm and with a 4.5ms seek time, the Raptor is billed as the world's fastest SATA drive. And although it's not especially large, it's big enough for a dedicated gaming rig. Two of them in RAID O configuration will give you almost 150GB and really make Battlefield 2 fly.



MULTISYNC LCD1970GX

EXPECT TO PAY

MANUFACTURER NEC Mitsubishi

www.nec-display-solutions.co.uk

The LCD1970GX is a 19in LCD screen, with an 8ms response time and an inky black glass screen that saturates all the colours and darkens the shadows. It includes a joystick controller for the on-screen display, and a four-port USB hub.



MX510

EXPECT TO PAY MANUFACTURER Logitech

WEBSITE www.logitech.co.uk

The best implementation of Logitech's MX optical engine, the MX510 features a huge image processing rate making it ideal for gaming. As well as being smoother and more accurate, it's lag free. Although heavier than the MX310, it remains well balanced and makes more sense than the MX1000.



Z-5500 **EXPECT TO PAY**

MANUFACTURER

WEBSITE www.logitech.co.uk

They'll cost you over £200, but they're also the best speakers we've ever tested at PC ZONE. They make both games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon find yourself blowing the dust from your old CDs and DVDs just so you can sit in the middle of the sound and revel in it.

SKINT?

GV-NX66T128VP TURBO FORCE

EXPECT TO PAY £133

MANUFACTURER GIGABYTE

WEBSITE uk.giga-byte.com

A fanless heat-pipe arrangement keeps this GeForce cool and silent. GIGABYTE claims a 38 per cent speed hike over a regular card - not quite, but the boost is noticeable - and it's definitely the fastest 6600GT we've tested. Thief: Deadly Shadows and Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising are bundled, and full VIVO capabilities allow you to capture and edit video from an external source - PowerDirector comes free. A stunning package at a stunning price.



PROCESSOR



ATHLON 64 3000+

EXPECT TO PAY

MANUFACTURER

WEBSITE www.amd.co.uk

If you don't mind getting your hands dirty in the BIOS, Athlon 64s can be highly rewarding - particularly so on an nForce4 motherboard. Famous for overclocking and top performance in games, there's really no alternative. This AMD chip is the one to have if you're building to a budget.



NFORCE4 ULTRA EXPECT TO PAY £80

MANUFACTURER

WEBSITE uk.asus.com

The A8N-E supports the full range of Athlon 64 FX, dual-core Athlon 64 X2 and Athlon 64 chips, plus PCI Express and 7.1 channel audio. The nForce4 Ultra chipset has more features than a circus has clowns, and ASUS includes a raft of its own, as well as some serious overclocking tools



1200JD SATA EXPECT TO PAY

MANUFACTURER Western Digital

WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

It's not like a 120GB hard drive is unfeasibly huge any more, but it's more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, a couple of hundred music files and the odd porn flick will still leave plenty of room for Windows to manoeuvre



EXPECT TO PAY

MANUFACTURER

WEBSITE www.viewsonic.co.uk

Not a lot of dosh buys you an awful lot of screen. The VE710s is a budget-priced 17in flat panel featuring an 8ms response time and 1,280x1,024 resolution and producing bright, crisp images worthy of the ViewSonic name. The company's UltraBrite technology gives rich and vivid colours in games.



OPTICAL BLUE

EXPECT TO PAY

MANUFACTURER Microsoft

WEBSITE www.microsoft.co.uk

If you've ever been boggled by the number of buttons on a mouse and have fond memories of a time when three clickers and a wheel were all you needed, Microsoft's blue rodent is for you. It's handsome, light, shaped for any handedness and features a gamecapable optical engine.



INSPIRE P5800

EXPECT TO PAY

MANUFACTURER Creative

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

You can go cheaper, but to meet the quality of the P5800 you'll need spend a lot more, as there's no better set in this price range. The subwoofer is deep and creamy, the satellites crisp and clean. A wired remote, line-in and headphone jack complete a very decent little package.

Are you destined for great evil? eu.cityofvillains.com Unleashed October 2005



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OW IT'S GETTING SERIOL

OTE FOR THE SHORTLIST FOR THE

BIGGEST AWARDS OF THE

You can be part of this year's Golden Joystick Awards by voting now for your favourite categories!

Text your vote and you will be entered into a draw to win a fabulous VIP trip for two to this year's Golden Joystick Awards and party in London PLUS hundreds of games to be won!

Example: If you think Tekken 5 was the best PlayStation 2 game of the year, text VA 9 to 80889 - don't forget to leave a space between the code and the number!

PC GAME OF THE YEAR

TEXT VE 1 TO 80889 > CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 5
TEXT VE 2 TO 80889 > DOOM 3: RESURRECTION OF EVIL

TEXT VF 3 TO 80889 > FOOTRALL MANAGER 2005

TEXT VE 4 TO 80889 > GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

TEXT VE 5 TO 80889 > HALF-LIFE 2

TEXT VE 6 TO 80889 > ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3

TEXT VE 7 TO 80889 > STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC II: THE SITH LORDS

TEXT VE 8 TO 80889 > THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE EARTH

TEXT VE 9 TO 80889 > THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY

TEXT VE 10 TO 80889 > WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR - WINTER ASSAULT

PLAYSTATION 2 GAME OF THE YEAR

TEXT VA 1 TO 80889 > DESTROY ALL HUMANS!

TEXT VA 2 TO 80889 > DEVIL MAY CRY 3 TEXT VA 3 TO 80889 > GOD OF WAR

TEXT VA 4 TO 80889 > GRAN TURISMO

TEXT VA 5 TO 80889 > GTA: SAN ANDREAS

TEXT VA 6 TO 80889 > LEGO STAR WARS

TEXT VA 7 TO 80889 > METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

TEXT VA 8 TO 80889 > PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4

TEXT VA 9 TO 80889 > TEKKEN 5

TEXT VA 10 TO 80889 > TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT

XBOX GAME OF THE YEAR

TEXT VD 1 TO 80889 > CONKER: LIVE AND RELOADED

TEXT VD 2 TO 80889 > DOOM 3

TEXT VD 3 TO 80889 > FORZA MOTORSPORT

TEXT VD 4 TO 80889 > GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

TEXT VD 5 TO 80889 > HALO 2

TEXT VD 6 TO 80889 > JADE EMPIRE

TEXT VD 7 TO 80889 > ODDWORLD: STRANGER'S WRATH

TEXT VD 8 TO 80889 > PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4

TEXT VD 9 TO 80889 > STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC II: THE SITH LORDS

TEXT VD 10 TO 80889 > TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY

GAMECUBE GAME OF THE YEAR

TEXT VB 1 TO 80889 > CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR

TEXT VB 2 TO 80889 > DONKEY KONG: JUNGLE BEAT TEXT VR 3 TO 80889 > KILLER 7

TEXT VB 4 TO 80889 > MARIO PARTY 6

TEXT VB 5 TO 80889 > METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES

TEXT VB 6 TO 80889 > PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND YEAR DOOR

TEXT VB 7 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 4

TEXT VB 8 TO 80889 > TALES OF SYMPHO

TEXT VB 9 TO 80889 > THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS ADVENTURES

TEXT VB 10 TO 80889 > TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT

THE SUN ONLINE - ONLINE GAME OF THE YEAR

TEXT VF 1 TO 80889 > BATTLEFIELD 2

SPONSORED BY ...

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TEXT VF 2 TO 80889 > CITY OF HEROES

TEXT VF 3 TO 80889 > EVE ONLINE: EXODUS

TEXT VF 4 TO 80889 > EVERQUEST II

TEXT VF 5 TO 80889 > GUILD WARS

TEXT VF-6 TO 80889 > PHANTASY STAR ONLINE BLUE BURST

TEXT VF 7 TO 80889 > STAR WARS GALAXIES: EPISODE III RAGE OF THE WOOKIEES TEXT VF 8 TO 80889 > STAR WARS GALAXIES: THE TOTAL EXPERIENCE

TEXT VF 9 TO 80889 > THE MATRIX ONLINE

TEXT VF 10 TO 80889 > WORLD OF WARCRAFT

HANDHELD GAME OF THE YEAR

TEXT VC 1 TO 80889 > ADVANCE WARS: DUAL STRIKE

TEXT VC 2 TO 80889 > ANOTHER CODE: TWO MEMORIES

TEXT VC 3 TO 80889 > BURNOUT LEGENDS

TEXT VC 4 TO 80889 > FINAL FANTASY I & II: DAWN OF SOULS

TEXT VC 5 TO 80889 > LEGO STAR WARS TEXT VC 6 TO 80889 > RIDGE RACER

TEXT VC 7 TO 80889 > SUPER MARIO 64 DS

TEXT VC 8 TO 80889 > The legend of Zelda: The minish cap

TEXT VC 9 TO 80889 > WARIOWARE TOUCHED!

TEXT VC 10 TO 80889 > WIPEOUT PURE

PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR

TEXT VI 1 TO 80889 > ACTIVISION

TEXT VI 2 TO 80889 > CAPCOM TEXT VI 3 TO 80889 > ELECTRONIC ARTS

TEXT VI 4 TO 80889 > KONAMI

TEXT VI 5 TO 80889 > MICROSOFT CORPORATION

TEXT VI 6 TO 80889 > NINTENDO TEXT VI 7 TO 80889 > ROCKSTAR GAMES

TEXT VI 8 TO 80889 > SONY

TEXT VI 9 TO 80889 > THQ

TEXT VI 10 TO 80889 > UBISOFT ENTERTAINMENT LTD.

THE SUN ONE TO WATCH FOR 2006

TEXT VM 1 TO 80889 > AGE OF EMPIRES III

TEXT VM 2 TO 80889 > ANIMAL CROSSING DS TEXT VM 3 TO 80889 > BURNOUT: REVENGE

TEXT VM 4 TO 80889 > FINAL FANTASY XII TEXT VM 5 TO 80889 > GEARS OF WAR

TEXT VM 6 TO 80889 > MARIO & LUIGI 2

TEXT VM 7 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 5

TEXT VM 8 TO 80889 > S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL TEXT VM 9 TO 80889 > THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

TEXT VM 10 TO 80889 > UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2007

THE ONE TO WATCH FOR XMAS 2005

TEXT VL 1 TO 80889 > BLACK & WHITE 2

TEXT VL 2 TO 80889 > CALL OF DUTY 2: BIG RED ONE

TEXT VL 3 TO 80889 > F.E.A.R.

TEXT VL 4 TO 80889 > GRAND THEFT AUTO: LIBERTY CITY STORIES TEXT VL 5 TO 80889 > MARIO KART DS

TEXT VL 6 TO 80889 > PERFECT DARK ZERO

TEXT VL 7 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 4

TEXT VL 8 TO 80889 > STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II

TEXT VL 9 TO 80889 > THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS TEXT VI. 10 TO 80889 > THE MOVIES

TEXT VN 5 TO 80889 > HALF-LIFE 2

TEXT VN 9 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 4

NUTS MAGAZINE ULTIMATE GAME OF THE YEAR

TEXT VN 2 TO 80889 > EVE ONLINE: EXODUS

TEXT VN 8 TO 80889 > PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4

TEXT VN 7 TO 80889 > METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

TEXT VN 3 TO 80889 > GOD OF WAR

TEXT VN 4 TO 80889 > GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

TEXT VN 6 TO 80889 > HALO 2

TEXT VN 10 TO 80889 > WORLD OF WARCRAFT

TEXT VN 1 TO 80889 > BATTLEFIELD 2

BEST GAME SOUNDTRACK OF 200

VOTE AND

HERO OF 2005

TEXT VO 2 TO 80889 From Half-Life 2

METAL GEAR SOLID 3

TEXT VO 1 TO 80889 > CJ FROM GTA: SAN ANDREW 0889 > GORDON FREEMAN

TEXT VO 3 TO 80889 > 1 FON FROM RESIDENT FVI

TEXT VO 4 TO 80889 > MASTER CHIEF FROM HALO

TEXT VP 2 TO 80889 > DR BREEN FROM HALF-LIFE

TEXT VP 3 TO 80889 > OFFICER TENPENNY

TEXT VP 4 TO 80889 > SADDLER FROM

TEXT VP 5 TO 80889 > VOLGIN FROM

BEST FILM-BASED

TEXT VG 2 TO 80889 > SPIDER-MAN 2

OLD REPUBLIC II: THE SITH LORDS

- REVENGE OF THE SITH

FOR 2005

TEXT VG 3 TO 80889 > STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE

TEXT VG 4 TO 80889 > STAR WARS: EPISODE III

TEXT VG 5 TO 80889 > THE CHRONICLES

OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY DEVELOPER'S CUT

THE GIRL'S CHOICE

TEXT VQ 1 TO 80889 > EVE ONLINE: EXODUS

TEXT VQ 2 TO 80889 > GTA: SAN ANDREAS

TEXT VQ 4 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 4

RETAILER OF THE YEAR

TEXT VK 1 TO 80889 > HALO 2 ONLINE RANKING

TEXT VO 5 TO 80889 > THE SIMS 2

TEXT VJ 1 TO 80889 > AMAZON

TEXT VJ 3 TO 80889 > GAMEPLAY TEXT VJ 4 TO 80889 > GAMESTATION TEXT VJ 5 TO 80889 > PLAY.COM

INNOVATION OF

TEXT VK 2 TO 80889 > NINTENDO DS

TEXT VK 3 TO 80889 > NVIDIA SL

TEXT VK 4 TO 80889 > SONY PSP

TEXT VK 5 TO 80889 > VALVE STEAM

THE YEAR

TEXT VJ 2 TO 80889 > GAME

TEXT VO 3 TO 80889 > HALO 2

GAME OF 2005 TEXT VG 1 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 4

FROM GTA: SAN ANDREAS

RESIDENT EVIL 4

METAL GEAR SOLID 3

TEXT VO 5 TO 80889 > SNAKE FROM

VILLAIN OF 2005 TEXT VP 1 TO 80889 > DEATH'S HAND FROM

TEXT VH 1 TO 80889 > GRAN TURISMO 4

TEXT VH 4 TO 80889 > NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND

All texts cost 50p per message plus your standard operator cost. Please ask the person who pays the bill before you send your vote. Service supplied by Mediacat Ltd, Grindhall, Henham, Herts, CM22 6AY
No purchase necessary: You may also vote online at www.goldenjoystick.co.uk

RULES: To be in with a chance of winning the VIP trip to this year's Golden Joystick Awards, simply text your vote and wait for the instructions on how to enter. All you have to do is answer the question sent to you following your vote.

TEXT VH 2 TO 80889 > GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS TEXT VH 3 TO 80889 > HALO 2

TEXT VH 5 TO 80889 > TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2



PCZONE

FREEPLAY

Got no money? No worries...

DISC EDITOR Suzy Wallace

WHAT'S FREE THIS MONTH

Lucked Out

HE PIXELLATED GODS of gaming have not been smiling on me this month. First off, the F.E.A.R. demo's embarrassingly proved that I am capable of screaming like a girl. And yes, I know I am a girl but that doesn't mean I have to scream like one... I leave that to Will.

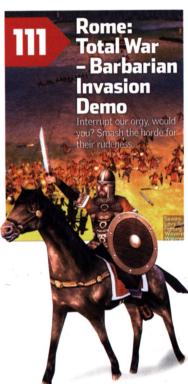
Next up, I found myself and my FPS skills being completely humiliated in *Battlefield 2*, by a combination of our dear readers and an annoying tendency of the machine that I was playing on to figure out the exact moment when I was about to actually make a kill and then crash. And lastly, despite a whole evening of trying, my cross-dressing attempts to become a man-whore in *Fable: The Lost Chapters* failed miserably. I suspect the mutton chop beard might have ruined my chances.

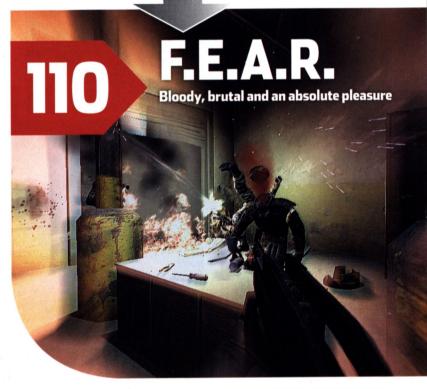
Luckily, it's looking like a better month for you as there's a host of great demos for you to sample (from the pant-staining F.E.A.R. to the hordes of Barbarian Invasion), an article on the best full free games available, a guide on how to get the most out of Battlefield 2 and a whole lot more. Enjoy!





Find yourself a chicken and type /chicken at it - this may take around 100 attempts! When the chicken looks at you quizzically, right-click on it for a quest. Complete this and it'll lay an egg which hatches into your very own pet prairie chicken.









Golf?

Note the question mark. Stupid

trousers not necessary



Free Games
Thus the section







O



FREEPLAYBUZZ

SNIPPETS

BUG HUNT

www.blackcatgames.com/swarn

A favourite old mod from a brand new Source



BATTLEFIELD KIT

After two weeks of closed beta testing, the team at EA and DICE has emerged from their development studios to announce the release of the mod toolkit, that will finally allow the mod community to create their own fantastic BF2 maps and mods. www.eagames.com/official/ battlefield/battlefield2/us/ editorial.isp?src=mod editor



L FOR CHARIDEE MATE!

The good chaps over at Second Life have decided to bring a little charity to their corner of the virtual world. While Relays For Life are going on around the US to raise money for the American Cancer Society, Second Life players can also partake in a virtual walkathon to raise money. Donations can be made in game currency, with over \$5,000 already raised. www.acsevents.org/ rfl/secondlife







THE ORIGINAL Alien Swarm was a clever little mod for Unreal Tournament 2004, pitching you and your squad against the Geiger-inspired horde. The forthcoming Alien Swarm: Infested ups the ante by using the mighty Source engine and, as the screenshots show, kicks some serious graphical bottom.

Infested is a single-player game, combining co-op and squad tactics and taking an overhead perspective rather than the FPS mode Source is better known for. However, this allows you to guide your squad SWAT-style, and may make for a deeper tactical experience.

Alien Swarm: Infested will be available either as a free-update for *Half-Life 2* owners, or a standalone version (price TBC) featuring extra levels, characters and weapons.





WORLD earth.google.com MOTION

Google Earth gives you the whole world in your (mouse) hand

THIS IS SPECIAL. It's not a game, but there's more entertainment value in the incredible new beta version of Earth Google than all of Davilex's games added together. For a small download, this amazing program gives you access to satellite imagery around the globe, enabling you to search for individual addresses and zoom right in to within hundreds of feet.

There are even virtual 3D representations of some of the larger US cities such as New York and LA, that you can use to find the locations of bars, roads and other useful info. You do need a good broadband connection to use it, but Google Earth is just an amazing achievement. Search for 'Future Publishing, London' and if you look carefully, you can see Prezzer and Sefton holding Will Porter out of the window by his ankles.

Music sounds www.ocremix.org better with Doom Tune in your PC with a blast from the past

TIME WAS, the term 'game music was considered an oxymoron, a series of hateful bleeps repeating endlessly to the frustration of gamers and disgust of casual observers. However, some

OVERCLOCKEP REMIX

LISTEN up!

clever bastards are reviving the sounds of yesteryear, as well as augmenting a number of more contemporary tunes.

The Unofficial Game Music Arrangement Community do their thing on a site called OverClocked ReMix, with a mission statement to "prove that this music is not disposable or merely just background, but is as intricate, innovative and lasting as any other form."

on Robert Prince and John Romero's original Doom music, itself heavily influenced by modern rock. You can download it for free, too - if you've got

FREEPLAYBUZZ

SPEED THRILLS





We talk to Eric Bailey and Scawen Roberts, the men behind the independent ZONE 90%-er, Live For Speed

PC ZONE So how did Live For Speed first come to be?

ROBERTS One weekend while I was working at Lionhead. I made a simple car sim that worked in three dimensions. Eric, who was the animator at Lionhead, liked the principle and said he'd like to build a track, so I coded up some tools that allowed the creation of a simple track. We got more and more into it, and went on to develop the tools and physics. I'm the programmer of nearly all parts of the program - physics, multiplayer, interface, tools, race control - all that stuff.

BATLEY And I do the tracks and cars. Victor, the other member of our team, is the web admin and online support man. PCZ Do you think some players might be, well, a little too competitive?

BAILEY Players can be overly aggressive if they don't have a lot of experience. Think about it - what would happen in the real world if people (of all ages) were allowed to race on a track without a racing licence, and with no track marshals or officials around to keep things in order? It could be very dangerous. That's



what happens a lot on the demo servers, unfortunately. In the real world you wouldn't be allowed on the racetrack if you had no self-control, or if your racing skills weren't up to scratch, because you would end up causing a serious accident. **ROBERTS** Yeah, our take on it is that the real community is friendly, polite and its members have supported us greatly all the way up to this point.

PCZ Having sampled the free servers, what can you say to entice players over into buying the commercial release?

ROBERTS Online racing is a very important feature of Live For Speed. People who make that small investment and buy the game can then go online and race with like-minded people. There are also various racing classes ranging from front-wheel drive hatchbacks, through to fast, single-seater racing cars. Plus there are the leagues run by community members, for those who want to get a bit more serious - and those leagues are designed for people of varying abilities. PCZ It seems amazing that such a realistic and popular game is independently developed and run by three people. What's your secret? **ROBERTS** The more people there are in a team, the harder it becomes to add new features. This is because of the number of lines of communication, and the fact that you need to get several programmers together at the same time just to add small features - like a change in the interface, the physics, the graphics and the race control system. With only one programmer, that kind of thing can be done quickly. Of course, it can take longer in terms of overall development time, but that's OK, we'll just take longer - after all, we don't have a publisher pressing us to finish before it's ready!

SNIPPETS



USE THE SOURCE

As promised during QuakeCon, id's now released the entire source code for Quake III Arena. So if you know a bit about coding, and fancy tinkering. with the code that defined fast, action-packed deathmatch, you can find the dinky 5.5MB file online now to grab from most download sites.



THE DEAD Take the sandbox delights of Garry's Mod and spawn a host of Holf-Life 2 nasties.

Now hold them off for long enough to build a base - you'll need shelter while you create your death-dealing machines. Genius! http://forums. facepunchstudios.com/archive/index.php?t-30392.html



European Patch v2.0 makes sure Grenades do not remain stuck in walls when launched, prisoners do not remain stuck in walls, and trees have collisions.

ALVERORS REED NE



The trailer's been around for a while now and the hype's been here even longer, but this new movie finally shows off some of the gameplay you can expect from id/Raven's



OUTDOOR environments in the Doom 3 engine! Will wonders never cease?



THE STROGG enemy is back and are looking as happy as ever. Wipe them out. All of them.



TEAM buddies are there to be brutally maimed and killed in front of you. Hurrah!



all-out war claims the battlefield.

FREEPLAYBUZZ

FOREST FEVER

NCsoft proves that superheroes always deliver

SPANDEX-SUITED heroes everywhere can rejoice with NCsoft's free release of Issue 5: The Forest Of Dread. The new zone 'Croatoa' is aimed at City Of Heroes characters between levels 25-35 and will be positively teeming with nasties, from pesky Red Cap imps to the formidable Tuatha de Dannan. New zone events also promise to liven things up a bit, with the Hellions torching buildings and overdosing Super-trolls wandering about.

Ranged attacks have been subject to a bit of an update with two new power sets, archery and sonics, now being available to Defenders, Blasters and Controllers. Blasters have also received a neat little gem in the form of the new 'Defiance' skill. Aiming to give the class a bit more oomph, when a Blaster's health gets low, they'll start to do more damage, from a 40 per cent increase at 39 per cent health, to a whopping 500 per cent increase when their health drops below five per cent.

108 PCZONE

vember 05

If things have gone according to plan (read as no evil villains have attempted to take over the world), then the update should be ready for you to play right now.



EMMA tried again to communicate her wish for a new settee. RANGED attacks have been updated.

Dungeon Siege II

DUNGEONS. NOW UNLESS we're

Win yourself a copy of the game - and the comic too!



there'd be an inherent space problem to resolve - your entire army's going to find it a bit hard to fit down one damp, slippery, twisty entrance, aren't they? And where would you fit all the

So it may be a bit of a preposterous concept (albeit one that we've obviously spent far too much time contemplating), but let's face it, it's a great title for a game. So great, in fact, that we've decided to give away ten full copies of

the PC ZONE-recommended, awardwinning game, each accompanied by a Dungeon Siege II comic. Meaning you'll be able to besiege dungeons from the comfort of your own home. You won't need an army, you won't have to dress warmly and you won't have to worry about slipping over and cracking your head open on the stone floor. A better idea all round really.

To win a copy of Dungeon Siege II, plus comic, all you have to do is answer the following question:

Who is the developer of **Dungeon Siege II?**

Send your entries on a postcard or the back of an envelope to: Dungeon Siege II compo, PC ZONE, Future Publishing, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6FP. Send your entry to us by October 12, 2005. Any received after this date will be used to create a pretty little montage.

FREEPLAYBUZZ

BUNDLE OF FUNSTA...

Codemasters' new online games portal gives you a freebie!

A NEW ONLINE games portal from the makers of TOCA Race Driver and Colin McRae is about to launch.

With an introductory offer of a free game, Funsta.co.uk is planning to provide hundreds of downloadable, quick, puzzle,

sports, arcade, board, adventure and card games for a monthly subscription (in the Funsta Arcade). You'll also find webgames on the site, and of course, fullprice PC titles from the Codies catalogue as well as products from other developers and publishers.

As an incentive for you to check out the site. Codemasters is offering a free download of its own Puzzle Bobble clone Super Pop & Drop. Funsta.co.uk is launching in September, and hopes to become one of the world's biggest online game providers. The price for the service has yet to be set, but as a reader of Freeplay, you won't have to worry about that - hit the link now and get summat







World Of Warcraft expands its borders

The naughty extra that never was...

NOTHING STANDS STILL in the WOW community, and this month there's news on the imminent 1.7 patch. So. here's what we know...

There's a new Troll City called Zul'Gurub – a high-level 20-person Raid area crammed with guests galore and 120+ fight as two rival clans scramble to be the first to accumulate 2,000 resource points. The key lies in capturing five resource



the most of the all-new Reputation rewards. There's also the promise of improvements including new Beast Mastery skills.



But that's not all. In the interests of weirdness, there's the 'Stranglethorn Fishing Extravaganza', set on the coast of Stranglethorn Vale, where the one who nets the most fish wins a magic hat, apparently. Rumours that a patch is also planned for the 'Yejomba Isle Bullseye Tournay', where fat blokes compete for a fistful of tenners and a Bully mascot, have so far been denied..





NAME Cindy Chin WORKING ON Zen Feng Shen **AGE** 27

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

Various trade shows and model shoots

PCZ How did you get started? CC Well, I joined a model agency called Image Model & Talent (www.imagemodels.com) who began getting me loads of model work all over the world - places like Las Vegas, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

PCZ What exactly do you do? **CC** I wear a butterfly costume and let people take photos. It's quite easy really. It's for an online game about ancient Chinese gods and demons, er, I think...

PCZ How much do you get paid? CC For three days' work I can receive anything up to about \$1,500 (£830).

PCZ Plans for the future? CC Ah. Well, I'm definitely going to stick with modelling. I really want to do more print work too, so this will be good for me. But I do love doing the shows – they're really fun and you get to meet a lot of cool people.

WE SAY... DIY

Want to be a booth babe - or booth bloke? You have to be goodlooking - fat American games punters won't want to heave themselves next to you for a photo if you have a face like a bag of spanners. The next step is joining a model agency, who will promote you and find cars/boats/ computers to drape your scantily clad body over. However, the fickle world of modelling doesn't guarantee work, and you'll always be in competition with younger and better-looking Lara Croft-wannabes.

So You Want To Be A... Games PR

FREEPLAYDEMOS

Jemos

Try 'em before you buy 'em!



DISC TROUBLES?

Having problems getting something off our discs to work? Phone our helpline on

01225 442244 and ask for cover disc support. Alternatively, email support@futurenet.

co.uk, including as much information as possible about your system and the nature of your problem.







F.E.A.R. EXCLUSIVE!

Scream like a girl at Monolith's action-packed creep show

www.whatisfear.com | ETA: October 18





IF EVER THERE was a game that warranted the lights being dimmed, the surround-sound being turned to maximum and every object in the vicinity that might accidentally brush against you in the heat of the moment being moved to one side, then this is it. Yes, if you can bear to bring yourself out from cowering under the covers, this is the title that you've been waiting for...



FIRE IN THE HOLE!

Got a few grenades on your person? Well, it's time to





HANDS DIRTY

TAKING IT SLOW



TRIGGER HAPPY

We hope that by now you'll be aware of what awaits you but if you've been hiding under a rock for the last year (or maybe just under those covers), you can expect the demo to offer a more than generous helping of blood, AI that will give the likes of Far Cry a run for its money, action that's packed to the max with spectacular effects, and a creepy little kid who has the ability to make you scream like a girl.



FREEPLAYDEMOS

STARSHIP TROOPERS

Service in Empire's bug-blaster guarantees citizenship

www.starshiptroopers-game.com ETA: October 28

WE SHOULD have called Rentokil we've got bugs all over the place! From RomeoJGuv's

interpretation of the Outpost scene in the Source engine (see page 116) to Empire's demo of the official title, there's plenty of bug blood to be spilled this month. The demo starts off at the Outpost level with a swarm of Warrior bugs moving into firing range, before seeing you setting off on your lonesome to restore power to the outpost. Now you can play both and decide which one you prefer.

Blasted Bugs You need to squish 'em all



Warrior Bugs



Worker Bugs



ROME: TOTAL WAR -BARBARIAN INVASION

The hordes are massing in CA's expansion

www.totalwar.com/community/rtwbi.htm I ETA: September 30

IT'S ABOUT TIME we had another great strategy title, and let's face it, they don't get much better than The Creative Assembly's Barbarian Invasion expansion for the all-encompassing Rome: Total War. While the demo features a tutorial to help brush up on those essential commander skills, the main carnage can be found in the two battle missions, one of which is beautifully set in the dead of night.

THE BATTLE OF BADON HILL

Site of the final battle of King Arthur...



The new night battles make for some spectacular effects, due to the amazinglooking fiery projectiles.

Yep, there's a bloody big bit of water between you and where you need to get to, with the other bank populated by enemy forces.

The War Cry option puts your heavy infantry into Berserker mode; uncontrollable but also nearly unstoppable.

With masses of cavalry at your disposal, wait until your infantry forces are locked in battle before sending them to the rescue. Tally-ho!

Choosing Sides

Can't decide which side to pick? It's a minefield...



King Of The Hill

King Arthur's ally is surrounded by Roman forces. Will you rally knights or crush him with Roman power?



Excuse The Hun

Attila's outnumbered barbarians face off against Romans and Goths. Do you choose superior numbers or tactics?

DOWNLOADS

NHL 06 DEMO



BATTLEFIELD 2 SPECIAL FORCES MOVIE





GT LEGENDS

GTR may have been essential fuel for petrol-heads, but GT Legends is a more accessible thrill-ride altogether. Pick the keys to either a Chevy Corvette, E-Type Jag or Lotus Elan 26R which you can take for a test drive at the Dijon circuit www.qt-legends.com



MYST V: END OF AGES

There are more bizarre goings-on with this demo of the latest, and indeed the last, instalment of Cyan Worlds' strange but beautiful adventure. Use the glowing orbs of light to journey between an ominous, jungle-filled world and some gorgeous beaches. www.mystvgame.com



This demo of Atari's fantasy RTS set in the Dungeons & Dragons universe features the first two missions from the game. Starting off on the beach, you'll have to choose your leader from four characters on offer, before setting off to rid the world of vile scum. Yet again



Freeware

Will Porter says there's no such thing as a free lunch. Free games meanwhile...

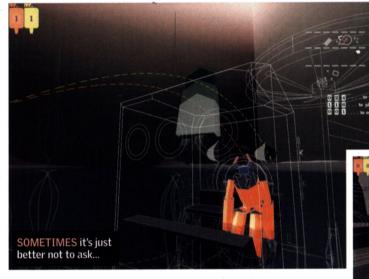
Freeplay is dedicated to bringing you the best free games content the Net has to offer, be it freeware, homebrews, remakes, webgames or emulation - you'll never have to buy another game again. Shamelessly pouting for your pleasure this month are an odd golf game, a Babylon 5 fan's dream & the fab Grow.



OGAME

In space, no-one can hear you plot

Who'd have thought you could rule the entire universe with just a Web browser? Well, Microsoft maybe, but with online strategy OGame you can experience the long and explosion-filled path to becoming an intergalactic emperor, albeit entirely text-based. Starting with a single homeworld, you must create a basic economic infrastructure metal mines, solar power plants and other basics. From there you build shipyards and research new technologies, before reaching out and claiming the stars as your own. It's deep stuff if you give it time, and there's a huge community constantly waging interstellar wars.





Developer: Alex Austin & Luke Hetherington www.golfquestionmark.com

A good walk entirely unspoiled









complaining about immigrants on an immaculately kept green. Instead, it features robots with the blue shirt from Ken's stage of Super Street Fighter 2X: Grand Master

TEEING off.

Challenge for a head, smacking balls with small tables on a wireframe course towards a hole with a flag that has a metal woodpecker on it. Caddies, meanwhile, are floating television sets reminiscent of Willo The Wisp with the face of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (32nd president of the United States, proponent of the New Deal). Bizarrely, the game also suggests that robo-FDR

has a drink problem.

The beta's nine holes are best played with a mate by tapping in the host's IP address (seeing as it's still in beta, it can be tricky to get a game going over a LAN if it's set up in any way that the currently limited software isn't expecting), and it gives you a breath of freedom like no other.

It uses the standard FPS controls (ducks, jumps etc) and doesn't make you wait while your competitor takes his shot - you just thwack away regardless. Scored a birdie and still waiting for your competitor to sink his ball? Then just leap in your wireframe buggy, aim towards the ramp and press the jet-boost at times, Golf? deserves its question mark. Tiger Woods beware, this game is brilliant.

THE BABYLO PROJECT

Get the hell *into* their galaxy

The Babylon Project: www.3dactionplanet.com/hlp/hosted/babylon Freespace 2 Source Code Project: scp.indiegames.us

Talk about dreams given form. The Babylon Project has been in the making since 1999, taking the beloved Freespace 2 engine and happy-slapping a *Babylon 5* paint job all over it. Finally, we have the chance to get our hands on the Starfury.

Since Sierra cruelly axed the original Babylon 5 game years ago, we've been

BEST played when eating

waiting for something like this. Sure, you don't have the inertia-based ship movement seen in the show, and the game mechanics and interface are Freespace 2's rather than having been converted to suit the B5 dynamic (and the voice 'acting' is straight out of amdram), but everything else is spot-on.

The ships look great given the engine's age, the action is spot-on and the missions follow the TV plots. Best of all, you don't need the original to play -





REEPLAYFREEWARE

Developer: Wizet I www.mapleglobal.com

Like eating a vat of syrup

Essentially the game where golden oldie Rainbow Islands and World Of Warcraft collide, you have to be ready to do a hell of a lot of snail and mushroom killing in the earlier sections of the free platform MMOG Maple Story. It's an odd assortment of players as well, leaping from log to ladder and communicating mainly through little anime girls with swishy hair typing 'GO AWEYS!' at vou when you accidentally pick up their hardearned shells.

This said, the further you get through the game the chattier peeps become mainly because by this point, most of the floating voters who are there simply due to the game's free-ness have realised that the game is so very, very dull and left.

AS fun as it looks.

Only the cream are left behind, and the game's true role as a platform-based chatroom is revealed. As always, experience, extra weapons and levelling up can keep you hanging around – but Guild Wars this is definitely not. Niche and Korean it definitely is.

PRIVATEER REMAKE & PRIVATEER GEMINI GO

Racketeering for retro fun and profit

Fun: wcuniverse.sourceforge.net Serious: priv.solsector.net

Did games really used to have this many buttons? The first time round, Privateer wasn't half this confusing, but somehow having a pdf instruction manual and the old shaggy visuals inside space stations adds an element of unexpected bewilderment. After a few hours of settling in, however, it all comes

flooding back. In an age largely bereft of space trading, then these two recast versions still make for good gaming - as we indicated last month, one has every star system in the right place with feverish accuracy, and the other with fan-made trimmings. Don't expect fancy tricks and big guns from the start

though - in the old days, fun was gained through hard graft. To the outsider both games are much of a muchness, their openings being identical. However, if you're fussy about such things, then save-games are interchangeable from the 'fun' one to the 'serious'. Bring back Wing Commander! The fight starts now!





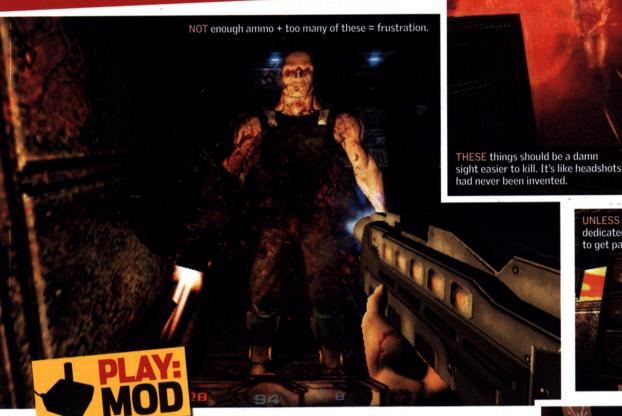


Grow



Bordering on impossible to describe, Grow is an apparently simple puzzle game that masquerades as a turn-based strategy affair in which you set up various parts of your fantasy kingdom with various different orders, then watch them level up while a denizer of evil does similar things with savage beasts. The fun comes through working out which bits of your kingdom need to be levelled up to a sufficient quality to get past different parts of the fantasy story, although you won't get any clues from me since half the fun (and addiction) s through working out what in the bloody blazes of hell is going on. Perfect for tea breaks and time

FREEPLAYPLAY!



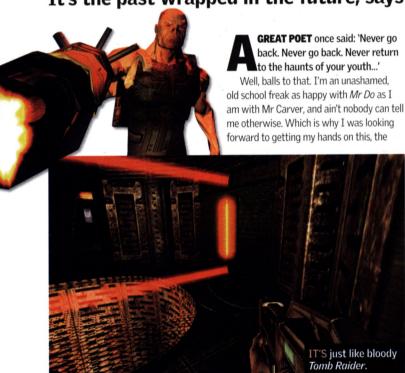


OPEN LIFT DOOR

LOOK! It's the *Doom 3* interface

but the Quake II game. Cripes!

It's the past wrapped in the future, says Dave Woods



long-awaited, unofficial port of Quake II to the splendiferous Doom 3 engine. Bliss.

Or at least it will be when they sort it out. At present it runs a bit like a threelegged pig unless you've got a PC faster than any currently invented. And there's no crosshair. And it's a bit dark. And it's got some serious balancing issues. And there's no discernible difference between any of the skill settings (in fact Easy mode seems even harder than Normal, which is already next to impossible), or fully-featured Save and Load modes, which means you can only save through hitting F5. And... The AI's rubbish, the animations stilted and the textures a bit poor. But amazingly, that's all OK.

BECAUSE...

Futrix, the development team, made a solemn promise that it would have a build ready for the just-gone QuakeCon, and this is it. And it's clearly labelled as a 'Test Build', which means that this is, for the time being

at least, a curiosity, a glimpse of things to come. But not something you're going to enjoy playing. Especially if you encounter some of the more annoying gameplay glitches, which can, in extreme circumstances, render your progress through the game impossible.

It's also worth pointing out that, strictly speaking, this isn't a port but a total conversion. Which means that you're not getting a copy of the Quake II experience, but a sort of director's cut. You might recognise some of the encounters from years gone by, but most of the gameplay is markedly different. Something you might well see in future builds, but not at the moment. In all honesty, in its current form it's just not worth persevering with, unless you're a techno-boffin who wants to be impressed by the programming wizardry. Have a look by all means, but then put it away and wait for a later build. I have.

FREEPLAYPLAY!

RODENTS in kitchens? Time to call Rentokil.

HAMSTER BASH

Steve Hogarty is a small, innocent creature...



HAMSTERS ARE

possibly the most depressed creatures on the planet. While it might seem like they're having fun when we place them inside little plastic balls and let them run around the living room worrying the dog, they're really wishing death upon themselves.

In UT2004 mod Hamster Bash, the depressing monotony of everyday hamster life has finally driven the little critters to partake in murderous hamster rampages, across three suburban-themed maps. Playing as one of the eponymous rodents, and destroying nearby scenery, and smashing into your fellow hamsters' balls. Earn extra points by clambering out of your plastic vehicle (leaving you vulnerable to a

flattening), and smashing time dropped by your foes. at dinner. been a hamster and, as such.

> I'm not familiar with the mechanics of turning speeds might be an accurate rendition of hamster warfare, they don't There's also the ever popular joy of getting stuck in scenery – a sad truth for real-life developer intended it or not. It's no Super Monkey Ball, but if you're in the market for hamster-themed mods you simply can't go wrong with Hamster Bash.

DOOM 3: (*) EXECUTIVE QUARTERS AND SIGMA CORE

Two new single-player maps from the always-busy *Doom* community

EXECUTIVE QUARTERS IS a new singleplayer map by Jason 'heXum' McCord, and makes a fair stab at the total Doom experience, weaving in a frantic mission set in an undiscovered part of the UAC base. At the start, you discover the corpse of the UAC's vice president, and the hunt begins to rescue his wife and daughter from within the Executive Quarters, hopefully returning them to the safety of a transit back to Earth. It's a nicely paced and well-scripted level, although perhaps lacking a big boss bastard at the end.

Sigma Core, however, by the prolific Ryan 'Quaker-X' Rutherford, takes a different tack - leaving you with nothing but your fists to explore the first part of this secret UAC facility. This makes for a creepy atmosphere, especially entering the toilet only to hear "Help me!" coming from one of

the cubicles (it's like a ZONE night out). Once you reach the armoury it gets predictable, with the usual hunt for PDAs and a fair amount of backtracking, but that criticism could be thrown at some of the original levels in Doom 3 - and that cost money. ARGHHH! How the hell did Janet Street-Porter get on Mars? SIGMA CORE takes a while to get going, but when it does... stand back

PCZONE TOP 5 QUAKE 3 MODS



WORLD OF PADMAN dd a splash of eccentricity to the Quake III world with this crazy, colourful, cartoon-style mod.

TRUE COMBAT If realism's your thing, it doesn't get any better than this: iron sights, realistic sounds, tactics

ROCKET ARENA This is fighting stripped down to the basic essentials. Forget power-ups - this is all about pure player skill.

WESTERN QUAKE III Bring the yee-hah of the Wild West to *Quake III* with duels, bank robberies and gunslinging maps.

Stays with the 'kill people' premise we all know and love, but adds a massive assortment of weaponry with which to do it.



ANTLION TROOPERS DEUCE



Suzy Wallace is doing her part. Are you?

big bugs.

AND on your left is

a lovely view of the local countryside."

antlions hl2world con

PAUL VERHOEVEN'S Starship Troopers was a bloody and brutal take on Heinlein's original novel and if you've seen it, you'll be sure to remember the attack on the outpost. Vastly outnumbered by hordes of man-mashing aliens, the desperate Marines try in vain to hold the fort whilst limbs fly, heads roll and green alien blood is liberally splattered around.

Sounds like the ideal setting for a game level, doesn't it? And lo and behold, RomeoJGuy's map is heavily influenced by the scene. Playing the role of one of a group of Combine sent to help defend an outpost against rampaging Antlions, you must use a combination of gun turrets and your skill to keep your Commander alive, whilst surviving wave after wave of the nasty critters.

Be prepared though, the first time you load this up death will be probably come swiftly: the sheer quantity of Antlions coming over the wall is staggering. But herein lies a problem - Valve never designed the Source engine for this many objects and the map is, by all accounts, a bit of a system hog. That said, a decent rig should have no problems, and a low-end version is available for any struggling machines. The voice acting's hardly going to win any awards either, stressful day, there's nothing like taking it out on a couple of hundred



TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC

Teamwork has never been such fun

ORIGINALLY A Quake mod, Team Fortress Classic was gifted to the Half-Life community by Valve back in 1999. The game gave players a choice of nine classes, each with their own strengths and weaknesses, and pioneered a number of gameplay variations.

What made *TFC* successful was its universal appeal. Beginners could be successful Engineers, while more demanding classes, such as Soldier, Medic and Pyro, required real dedication to master. Though unrealistic and lambasted by *Counter-Strike* players, the game is in fact more laid-back, funny, and not played by wankers.

BATTLE WWW.bgmod.com GROUNDS 2

Suzy Wallace examines a new low in Anglo-American relations

WHEN I HEARD that I'd have to review a historic mod based around the American Civil War, I wasn't exactly keen. History was one of my most hated lessons at school, and I could never see what the big fuss was over a tea party anyway...

But whether it was the carnage going on around me or the constant cries of "Freedom!" that stirred something in my Wallace blood, I was hooked. You see, while most shooters are about emptying as much lead into your opponent as possible, *Battle Grounds* starts you off with a mere 12 bullets. True to the period, reloading involves the lengthy process of inserting the shot and



gunpowder before stoking the barrel. All of which takes around ten seconds, leaving you as vulnerable as a kitten with a limp. Of course, there's always melée weapons (bayonets, sabers etc) to stab away with but

you can't reload at the same time, making for some brilliant, on-your-feet decision-making. And that's what makes *Battle Grounds 2* so great – in this world, literally every shot counts.





FREEPLAYPLAY!



: TO1 REALISMO

Sam Kieldsen gets a history lesson

IKE US, YOU might have thought that Rome: Total War was among I the best strategy games ever, but according to some people, you're dead wrong. And you probably smell, too. And maybe even wear a cap in the classic jaunty chav style.

Who are these naysayers, you ask, and where can they be found? Why, on the Internet, of course! Point your web browser towards the likes of www.twcenter.net's forums and feel the hatred flow. Most of the 'debate' might be along the pitiful lines of 'Y r therr gladaitors???? Rome nver used them', 'S£ga is ruining the expanshun' and 'Lolz the egyptions didnt ware hats like that' (no, really), but there is certainly a grain of truth in what they're saying. Rome: Total War isn't too big on historical accuracy, and that, readers, is what some people want in their strategy games.

Enter Rome: Total Realism, a massively ambitious fan-made mod that takes the original game, expands the world all the way out to India, squeezes out most of the less

than realistic elements and replaces them with stuff that's historically tighter than a post-Norman Invasion chastity belt. The Roman gladiators and Arcani are gone, the Egyptian chariots have been given the old heave-ho, and the tough-asold-boots Spanish Bull Warriors are nowhere to be seen.

Instead, there are loads more types of skirmishers, spearmen (phalanx-type units are everywhere apart from Western Europe) and missile cavalry, reflecting how things actually were back in the day. Movement speeds have been toned down (particularly for heavily armoured infantry) so that it doesn't look like both armies are full of Linford Christie types, and almost every unit has been re-skinned or remodelled in a startlingly professional fashion.

Settlement and unit names have been corrected, and even the effect and cost of the various buildings has been altered. While it seems to us like quite a bit of the fun has been taken out of the game in the quest for historical accuracy, we can't help but be

impressed by the sheer amount of quality work that has gone into Total Realism. In fact, we'd say that it's one of the most professional-looking mods we've ever played - and if you're at all bored with the vanilla campaign, or can't wait for the imminent Barbarian Invasions expansion (see p68), it's well worth playing.

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ight Club M First rule of Fight Club: make good use of natural cover



ATTLEFIELD 2 WAS the August game of choice, and to be honest most of now wish it hadn't been. Not only was our crippling lack of skill on show for all to see (Will's numerous inept plunges into the sea then shouts for rescue were something of a recurring theme), we were also bedecked by technical problems - BF2 not being the most friendly of games to get running it seems. Ah well. Hopefully EA will have sorted things out by the time we try it again.

The September Fight Club will be happening as you read this, so the next slot is Thursday, October 13 at 6.30pm. We'll be playing SWAT 4 in its various guises and it promises to be an absolute riot. Which, as upholders of justice and law we will naturally be looking to quell - preferably with copious amounts of pepper spray and plentiful use of the tazer. You can find details of this and all Fight Clubs over at www.zonegames.co.uk, where we print a list of each month's top players, have full server listings and upload a choice selection of screenshots from each event so you can see yourself in glorious action.

If you have any screens of your own that you want to share with us (and maybe get included in the mag), send them to fightclub@pczone.co.uk and we'll choose the best. We also want your suggestions for future Fight Club events, so get writing and let us know your personal flavahs of choice. In return, we promise never to try and use 'street' slang again. Sorry about that.





Plenty to talk about last month, what with our swanky new look and all. Unfortunately, the ZONE Chat took place a day or so before we went on sale, so much of the conversation was conjecture about content, font size and the look of the logo. Luckily, things soon broadened out to cover our topic du jour - scary games. Plenty of nominations for the scariest game moment ever, from the latest trappings of the F.E.A.R. demo to ancient classics like Cruise For A Corpse.

We've just had September's ZONE Chat, and you can find the transcript at www.zonegames. co.uk. The next one will take place from 5-6pm on Wednesday, October 12 in the usual #pcz channel on Quakenet IRC. Come on in, take a load off and join the fun. We may even have a competition next time. Perhaps.

A kind reader offers us a lift.

FREEPLAYFIGHTCLUB

Up to the minute server information can be located at www.zonegames.co.uk! Jamie Sefton PCZ_NorthernScum Paul Presley - PCZ_Prezzer Will Porter - PCZ_Batsphinx Suzy Wallace - PCZ_Uzibat Jamie Malcolm - PCZ_JimLad



BATTLEFIELD 2

bf2.zonegames.co.uk



COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE

cs1.zonegames.co.uk:27015 cs2.zonegames.co.uk:27025



HALF-LIFE 2: DEATHMATCH

hl2.zonegames.co.uk:27055



HALF-LIFE DEATHMATCH

hl.zonegames.co.uk:27035



TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC

tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27045



CALL OF DUTY

cod.zonegames.co.uk:28960



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

utl.zonegames.co.uk:7777 ut2.zonegames.co.uk:8888



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SEMI-FINALS

turtz 20 - 0 s0x (game forfeited) iR 21 - 14 Swisha

Alan 'jR' Todd 20 - 11 Matthew 'turtz' Coppard WINNER

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Get ahead in Battlefield 2

Steve Hogarty readies his guns and knives for action...

HEN ON THE battlefield, it's important to remember some key skills. Things like battlefield awareness – being aware that while enrolling in the army seemed a fun idea at the time, the reality of sitting in a field eating vacuum-packed questionable meats is anything but – are handy, but to be a true war veteran you need to know how to get one up on the enemy in style. Luckily, we're going to tell you how to do just that...



On A Roll

There's much mischief to be had when playing with the Special Ops kit, and you'll find most of it revolves around

the handy packs of C4 explosives. Stick as much of the stuff as you dare to a vehicle of your choosing (we recommend the buggy for this), then drive headlong into a populated enemy base, bailing out at the last moment. With your mobile car bomb still trundling along, detonate it at will.



02 I'll 'Ave That

It should be no secret that with a tap of the G key you can swap your kit with that of a fallen soldier. If you find yourself wounded and without a medic in sight, try and find a medic kit among the bloodied corpses – you can swap it with your own kit, throw down a few medic packs, reclaim your original kit, heal yourself and be on your merry way.



03 Knives Out

Knife fights are a mini-phenomenon among a select few online games. Though they're relatively rare on the battlefields, they do happen and they're often hilarious to watch. Initiated by somebody shouting, "KNIFES LOL," knife fights are a sacred and honourable sport. To raise a gun during a knife fight is to bring great dishonour upon your family, and it's likely you'll be picked on for the rest of the round too.



To seriously cripple the enemy commander's abilities, concentrate on taking out three targets at his main base: the UAV trailer, the radar and the artillery. Load up a helicopter with Special Ops and head to the enemy base it's likely that the enemy are concentrating on the front line, leaving you to destroy the

targets using your C4. Keep their engineers from repairing these structures to ensure victory.





Clear!

Playing with the medic kit gives you access to an amazing and possibly magical pair of cure-all shock-pads. Not only can you revive mortally-wounded team-mates with the shock pads, but they also double as offensive weapons against any ne'er-do-wells within arm's reach. Find an unsuspecting enemy soldier, creep up behind him and give him the shock of a lifetime. You'll be grinning with smug satisfaction if you can pull it off.

06 Mine **All Mine**

Snipers are equipped with extremely useful claymore mines which detonate when a vehicle or infantry unit wanders in front of them. When sniping, surround yourself with claymores to prevent any enemies catching you off guard. If you're sniping from the crane on the Gulf of Oman map, be sure to plant a claymore at the top of the ladder to surprise those plucky ladderclimbing Americans.

WELL, it's one way to stop Jane MacDonald singing.

07 Mods Among Men

With the recent release of the BF2 modding tools, the Internet has exploded with a plethora of optimistic hopefuls vying to create the next Desert Combat. With nothing but a handful of renders and a pocketful of dreams, it's clear that, like tiny baby turtles, many of these mods won't make it. And in what's clearly an exercise in redundancy, the most popular arena among modders this time is WWII - check out warfront.bf1942files. com/ to get an idea of what's in store with the WarFront mod.

For something a little more original and a lot more exciting however, check out Battlefield: Apocalypse at www.bfapocalypse com - an upcoming Mad Maxinspired total conversion in which four factions fight for supremacy across post-apocalyptic wastelands. Unfortunately, Max's superchargerladen chariot of steel is nowhere to be seen at the moment, but otherwise the mod looks promising.

Happy to stick with present-day warfare, BF2 Mercenaries tweaks the current gameplay to provide a more explosive experience. Among other changes, it adds sidewinder missiles to the Blackhawks and provides some much flashier explosions. Head over to www. mercenaries.dies-world.com.



08 Smoking Kills

The assault kit's smoke grenades are very useful on urban maps such as Strike at Karkand. Use them to conceal your movements across streets and alleyways, to cause confusion when capturing control points or just to enhance the atmosphere of your rave parties. Couple your assault units with your anti-tank units in Karkand to create a devastatingly efficient tank-killing squad, capable of stealthily manoeuvring around and exposing the weak ends of tanks.

09 Top Gun 🎜

A few things to keep in mind when in the pilot seat of a billion dollars-worth of wings and circuitry - hold CTRL to look around the cockpit and spot your enemies, use SHIFT to activate your afterburners for a quick getaway and, if the situation arises, be courteous enough to inform your

passengers to bail out before you do the same. Also, be efficient and try to ensure you have a copilot before taking to the skies.



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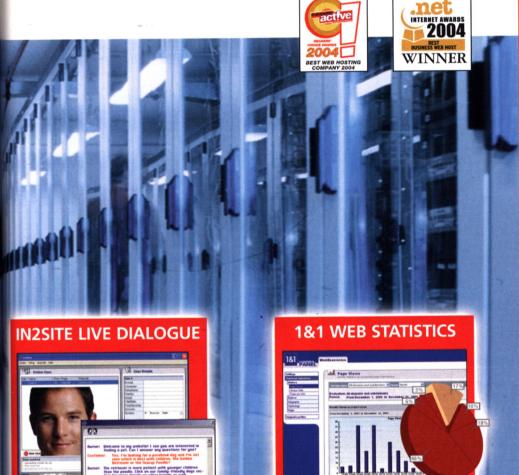
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为 – Linux packages



FREEPLAYHOWTO...



Play free full games



Five of the best - given away with this issue!

S A FREEPLAY exclusive this month, we're bringing you a collection of fully complete and absolutely free games for your delectation - you'll find five with the DVD edition and three with the CD edition of PC ZONE. Both Treasure Island Dizzy and BMX Simulator are a classic slice of old-school gaming from UK publisher Codemasters,

Beneath A Steel Sky is from the heyday of point-and-click adventures by the creator of the Broken Sword franchise, The Elder Scrolls: Arena is the first of Bethesda's ground-breaking freeform role-playing games, and Hidden & Dangerous Deluxe is the stunning WWII squad-based shooter. How do you like them apples?



IS THAT ALL HERF IS

Of course not! Almost everywhere you look at the moment, former fullpriced titles are becoming Freeware or Abandonware - computer software that is no longer being sold or supported by its copyright holder, but technically illegal to download.

Take a trip to the excellent Abandonia (www.abandonia.com - check out page 128) and you'll find Amiga classics such as Alien Breed, psychedelic cuties like Bubble Bobble and the always addictive Lemmings series, all dusted down for the PC.

Meanwhile the Rockstar Classic selection now contains the vehicular combat game Wild Metal Country and Grand Theft Auto 1 and 2 - all available from www.rockstargames. com/classics. Plus there's 3D Realms' shoot 'em up Stargunner (3drealms. com/index.shtml), Sierra's Starsiege: Tribes and Tribes 2 (www.sierra.com) and Alawar's Battlecruiser Millennium (www.3000ad.com). To be honest, though, the latter received just 45 per cent in PC ZONE issue 112, so only download if you fancy a chuckle or you have no life.



01 BMX Simulator

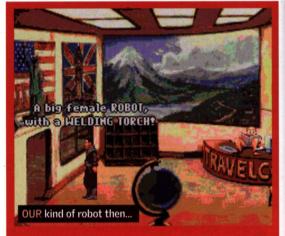
www.codemasters.co.uk

Today, sticking the word 'sim' on a box means a high degree of realism, especially when it comes to things like HUDs, locations and technical details. In 1987, however, when all the graphics had to fit into 48k of memory (barely enough these days to animate your desktop clock), it was all about gameplay.

This made sims harder to play than other games, with less forgiving handling and tighter objectives. BMX Simulator has seven tracks, all viewed in an effective but minute isometric perspective, with three laps of each course to complete against the clock and extra points racked up for stunts. There's also a decent soundtrack by the great Rob Hubbard, who wrote dozens of tunes for Commodore 64 games as varied as Zoids, Thanatos and Geoff Capes Strongman Challenge.

Although this is now the kind of game you'd expect to play on your mobile (and with vastly better graphics), BMXS did pave the way for grittier sims like Stunt Car Racer and eventually Colin McRae Rally. A couple of hours fun and a videogame history lesson - all for absolutely nowt.





Deneath A Steel Sky

Back in 1994, when CD ROMs were still just a glint in most developers' bloodshot

eyes, if you wanted pretty graphics you were pretty much restricted to the one genre capable of producing them - the point-and-click adventure.

Beneath A Steel Sky was one of the first, and with a combination of logical puzzles and free-moving visuals it really set the standard, competing with LucasArts' classic range including The Secret Of Monkey Island and Sam D&D influences of Lure Of The Temptress to cyberpunk, drawing on the work of comic artist Dave Gibbons to

The objective of BASS is to first survive and eventually escape the city, across an inhospitable wasteland known as the Gap. And despite the old-school gameplay, even today (or arguably especially today) it feels better Revolution, meanwhile, jumped franchise again to the Broken Sword games, the fourth instalment of which it's working on for a summer 2006 release.

Bangerous Deluxe

It feels like only yesterday (although it was, in fact, last century) that H&D was fêted as a minor masterpiece, zinging out of darkest Hungary and setting the mould for the hyper-realism of wargames like Medal of Honor. Yes, it may have needed more patches than a Beagle recently escaped from a tobacco testing centre, but it somehow felt grittier and more realistic than previous shooters.

Part of this was down to the weaponry, carefully modelled on real-world guns and setting the tone for today's near-fetishistic levels of historical objectives completed an impressive debut for developer Talonsoft, although this turned out to be only half the story, thanks to a long and often hilarious list of bugs. Enemies got caught inside doorways, fallen comrades started assumed they were gone forever. Still, after H&D it became easier for the likes of Call Of Duty and Brothers In Arms to be taken seriously. The Deluxe pack has the original game and the Fight For Freedom expansion.



The Elder Scrolls: Arena

With the new game (Oblivion) keenly awaited this Christmas, let's take a trip back to 1994 and see how the Elder Scrolls saga began. What Arena lacked in detail, it made up for in scope, with over 400 places to explore and a typically wellthought-out storyline that had you searching for eight pieces of the staff of Chaos to rescue the Emperor from confinement

and restore peace to the land.

OK, so the plot won't win any prizes today, but remember all this sounded vaguely original at the time, and it was one of the few RPGs to take on the first-person perspective - something the series has stuck to ever since.

As always, time has been hardest on the graphics, with an ancient 3D engine that confines you to moving in single planes (so no climbing staircases or mountain passes, then) and the kind of ropey animation and collision detection that even MMOs have now outgrown (unless you're playing Asheron's Call, that is). Still worth a peek, though - if only for one of the first uses of random weather effects in a role-playing game.

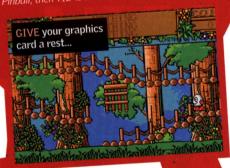


<mark>05</mark> Treasure Island Dizzy

Back in the mists of 1988 the Dizzy games were hugely popular, making minor stars of the Oliver twins who wrote them, and millionaires of the Darling Brothers who published them.

Treasure Island Dizzy was the second in the series, with your egg-like hero stranded and needing to collect 30 gold coins to fix his boat to leave the island. Cue the usual flick-screen puzzle-solving stuff, done better by the full-priced titles of the day like Jet Set Willy (remember at this time, Codemasters only did £2.99 budget games). Another thing that made *TID* unusual was its use of digitised speech in the introduction – an impressive technical feat in those days that almost made up for how often you had to hear it, on account of only getting one bleeding life...

Gameplay-wise, if you think the original Tamagotchi's still a blast and can't wait to get home for another hectic session of Windows Pinball, then TID is a decent fix of retro action



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HOW TO...

Make a game PART TWO

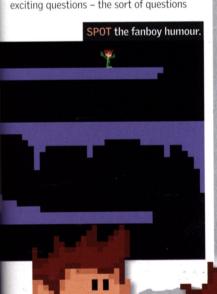
Little green men are exciting Dan Marshall...

F YOU MADE it through last month's pathetic, defeatist weeping, you may recall that I hadn't actually gotten particularly far with the whole 'learning to be an indie developer' thing.

However, I can now report that my game, Gibbage, is looking rather good. I've come on in leaps and bounds, making at least 20 years worth of videogame evolution in approximately 30 days. Gibbage currently looks something like a game from the Commodore 64 (ancient 1980s home computer), albeit with slightly more detailed graphics. There's character control and even gravity. In just 30 days, I've created a tiny world and populated it with a little man. Bizarrely, it's the proudest moment of my adult life, and I'm riding on a high.



Admittedly, there's still very little actual game to be found in my code (unless you get all excited over an extraordinarily simple maze game, that is) - but you have to admit that it's taking shape. This leap in progress has led to me thinking about all sorts of exciting questions – the sort of questions



Killing fields

If you're going on a killing spree, it'd better be pretty...

It might sound obvious, but deathmatch games live and die on the strength of their arenas - and Gibbage will be no different. So I've started to sketch out a few concept designs for the maps. Obviously there'll have to be one set in hell, that's a videogame given... Other arenas will include innercity slums, low-grav moon bases, atop a speeding train and disused army bases. It seems everywhere I turn, Unreal Tournament has been before.



/IY world. I take Sundays off..

I've been dying to ask from the day I started this crazy challenge. What sort of guns should I design? What sort of Jedi-style moves should I dream up? Where should the action be set?

These are fun questions, and I can't wait to get started putting them into place. The revolution starts here. I don't know about you, but I've had it with big budget, soulless releases. I'm fed up with bad guys sneaking up on me, shouting "Hey! You!" and waiting for me to spin around and shoot them in the face. Indie games are where it's at: fresh, innovative releases that are no-nonsense fun.

At least, that's what it says on the indie websites. Truth is, many companies just release three-in-a-row colour matching games because bright flashing colours are what appeals to bored officeworkers and housewives, and these socalled 'casual games' can bring in a fairly steady stream of cash. But all that's not for me. I've planned Gibbage so it'll be accessible to hardcore and casual gamers alike. You can spend two hours or two minutes in front of my game. It has bright, flashing colours for the girls and gibs aplenty for the boys...

Like the pioneering coders of the early 1980s (see Jeff Minter, p142), I'm holed up in my bedroom, programming late into the night drawing the graphics, hammering code and playtesting until my fingers turn blue. Next month, I hope to have a slightly more advanced engine up and running so I can invite you properly into my world...

Endless enthusiasm A fridge full of cheap lager Game Programming All in One (2nd Edition) – J Harbour Lots of colouring crayons to design with...

Time:

Six months

What you'll get:

Sprite manipulation Animation Alcoholic over-indulgence A fun game Something that would wow a

Sega Master System owner 🔀

If you want more. www.gamedev.net

An excellent site for beginners,

where you can ask as many stupid questions as you like without

www.gamasutra.com

This isn't programming-based as such, but has tons of articles on game design and concepting. For when you're feeling bogged down in code and need to step back.

www.indiegamer.com

important threads nevertheless

FREEPLAYABANDONWARE

abandonware

Kosta Krauth round ups more abandonware games for your freeloading delight

Vhat is abandonware?

Abandonware is computer software that is no longerbeing sold or supported by its copyright holder, such as the classic sci-fi RPG shooter System Shock 2. However, game copyright is protected by law for 70 years, so even though you can't buy these games, downloading them is technically illegal. PC ZONE doesn't condone filthy criminals. Or even ones that have had a wash.

OSBOX IS AN open source DOS emulator for BeOS, Linux, MacOS X and Windows, and is essential for running old PC titles. Many are driven away by its lack of graphical user interface, but it's simple to master with a bit of patience.

You can get acquainted with most common operations by typing 'intro' in the command line interface. We also recommend you go through the list of some basic DOS commands if you've never used DOS before. You can get a list of these by entering 'help'.

Next issue, I'll show how to control the internal CPU clock, and tweak the configuration file to certain game needs.







s Maker 2

DEVELOPER GainaX YEAR OF RELEASE 1996



Princess Maker 2 can be considered one of the most detailed and successful attempts at shaping and controlling your own virtual alter-ego.

A classic story about a wandering swordsman (you), defeating an evil army of demons sent to destroy a town plagued by corruption and decadence. For your heroic actions, the gods have entrusted you with a child from the heavens, unblemished by civilisation's arrogance and vanity. You can shape the final path

your adopted daughter will take by creating a monthly schedule of her girlish activities. Every action will improve and deteriorate certain aspects of her character and social status, and you're able to check on your character's progress by having her compete in the Harvest Festival held every year. Rather than being an excuse to get rid of old tins of sweetcorn and peaches, this is a no-holdsbarred talent show where your princess can show off her expertise in four different areas (cooking, fighting, dancing and painting). You have to focus on balancing all of her abilities in order to have her achieve the ultimate goal - becoming a real queen and a good mother (because that's what all girls want

Eye-catching anime visuals aside, Princess Maker's brilliance lies in the fact that it offers your virtual girl no less than 74 different life paths she can choose, so the tiniest decision or negligence will profoundly influence her final calling and success. Getting off with Prince William isn't one of the game modes, but back in 1996, he was only about 13. What would Germaine Greer make of it all...



The name Gainax should be familiar if you've ever found yourself engulfed in the cutesy world of Japanese anime. You might also recognise it from the fan-made terms "gainaxing" or "gainax bounce", which stand for a painstakingly precise animation of a woman's chest bouncing, originally inspired by a "bunny" character from Gainax's 1982 feature, Otaku No Video. After quite a few ups and downs in the 1980s, the company

took a break in anime production, and focused its efforts on videogames. The first Princess Maker title was released in 1991.

You can check out Kosta's abandonware website at www.abandonia.com



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FREEPLAYNEVERQUEST

A boy and his pet.

STEVE HILL'S QUEST

Guild Wars is never done. Just ask Steve Hill...

OES ANYONE HAVE leathery claws?" Under the circumstances, it's a fair question. Nevertheless, it's with a resigned sense of despair that I ignore Keojy Nomuri's request. It's not like I can help anyway; I have no claws, leathery or otherwise. What I do have is a series of tedious chores to carry out in return for a handful of coppers or a worthless trinket. Quests they call them, a pitifully transparent spin on what is essentially drudgery. If someone sends you down the shop for bread and milk, it's not a guest. The same applies for carrying out jobs for the locals of Ascalon City. It's a diabolical liberty.

"Sure is lonely being a pig farmer," pipes up Farmer Dirk. Yeah, well try being me for a day, pork boy. I've got an infestation of plague worms to clear up, some Devourer eggs to protect, and a valley full of grawls to slaughter. It's not all gala lunches. OK, so I'm in the open air a lot and the scenery is admittedly beautiful, but there's a lot of graft involved. I've even had to take on an apprentice in the form of a big cat that I've managed to tame. Melandru's Stalker is its unlikely name, and it happily tears the throats out of enemies while I pick them off with a bow and arrow.

DANCE DANCE DANCE

We've actually grown quite close, but it's still no replacement for human contact. A man needs a woman, and I'm no different, despite the long hair and skin-tight leather kecks. It's not as if there's a deficit of attractive women – there are loads – it's just that it's hard to find the time to get to know them. Everyone's so busy, what with running errands and murdering giant crabs. People don't talk any more. And when they do, it's generally in an attempt to sell "a 7-10 damage piercing bow for 20 gold and a ball hammer with same damage, also for 20 gold". Thanks for the offer, Red X Killer, but a simple "hello" would have sufficed.

Rapidly losing faith with the human race, I spot a willowy young Necromancer by the name of Sara Kerrigen, stood on her own in a courtyard dancing seductively. It's a striking image and one that causes a rush of blood to the head. Sidling up to her without a word, I strike a pose then launch into a swan dive, segueing seamlessly into a



A man needs a woman and I'm no different, despite the long hair and skin-tight leather kecks

caterpillar, the move crowned in style by an effortless 360 on the top of my head. And all this on a cobbled street without a mat.

HAPPY TOGETHER

It has the desired effect, as Sara Kerrigen stops what she's doing and exclaims: "You breakdance. Yay." Perhaps no need for the 'yay', but she's right about the breakdancing, and in fact is so impressed that she immediately invites me to join her guild. OK, so the guild consists of her and her alone, but it's a start. This is Sara, and we are... Cold Attack.

With my new guild-mate and trusty pet in tow, it's with a renewed sense of purpose that I set about my remaining chores. Hatwearing local, Pitney, has lost his prize Moa bird and I've foolishly agreed to track it down for him, a task that Sara is happy to help with, eagerly following me through a series of dingy catacombs. We finally track

down the bird, or more accurately, ex-bird, as it's apparently been savaged to death as part of some twisted sacrificial ritual. Pitney doesn't take the news well, but is gracious enough to reward me with a smiting staff and a long sword.

GONE IN SIXTY SECONDS

I'm about to share the wealth with Sara when she announces that she has to go, and that she'll be away for at least ten days. What? Even more unexpectedly, she explains that her "mom" will be here in her absence and that I'm not to talk to her, "as she doesn't know that I even have a guild".

"So I'm going to be playing with your mum?" I ask uneasily. Sara replies: "Not really, if you don't talk to her she won't know that you're there." Admittedly, I wasn't quite ready to meet the parents, but this has all come as something of a shock, and I lash out, asking: "Who are you people, the *Guild Wars* family?"

It turns out I'm not far off the mark, as there's also a brother involved, all based in Stewartstown, Pennsylvania. Sod the lot of them. And sod that mangy cat that's been following me around. It's me against the world, and in a fit of disillusionment I re-train as a warrior and sign up for the army, bidding farewell to Ascalon City forever. Goodbye cruel world. Let the real guild wars begin... pcz



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T MAY WELL be the case that you cannot swing a medium-sized moggy about the place these days without knocking over at least a dozen precariously stacked World War II games, and the blame for this state of affairs can be laid firmly at the feet of Medal Of Honor.

We were an innocent lot back in 2002. Four years earlier, Saving Private Ryan had shifted the moral perspective on anything WWII-themed. Before, thanks to the likes of 'Allo 'Allo and Where Eagles Dare, WWII was either a non-stop laugh riot of comedy Germans and harmless xenophobia, or a blood-soaked action-fest where one US soldier was egual to about half the Third Reich and carried enough bullets in a single gun chamber to see them all off. Then-Spielberg came along, showed war in all its blood-strewn, limb-severing, psychologically-traumatising horror and suddenly the goalposts shifted.

It took just one year for gaming to catch up, with a much trumpeted PlayStation title claiming to redefine the rules of first-person war gaming. It made







something of an impact, but it wasn't until the PC release of Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault three years after that, that people suddenly sat up and took notice. The war game had grown up.

WAR IS HELL

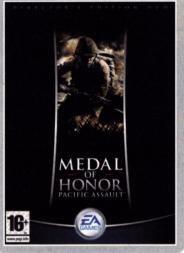
For most, the first indication that something was different was when the Omaha Beach video started circulating around the Net. There it was, the opening 20 minutes of Saving Private Ryan in completely playable form, unsanitised, unfettered and uncensored. This was to be something special – exciting and profound at the same time.

The game itself didn't fail to match expectations and gave EA Games its first taste of true Hollywood blockbuster-style hits, propelling the now über-publisher firmly into the big time. This was interactive war as we'd never seen it before - real, visceral and respectful of the real-life experiences it, was based on. This wasn't one man versus the Nazis. This was squads, comradeship, ammo counts, realistic objectives and atmosphere you could cut with a knife.

MOH scored big across the board and paved the way for the franchise it was set to become. Subsequent titles have sadly weakened the impact, though. Console iterations seemingly dumbed-down the content to appeal to their markets, while the less-than-stellar Pacific Assault suffered at the hands of the rival brands of Call Of Duty and Brothers In Arms both of which titles have seen fit to improve the player's experience rather than, in PA's case, merely re-clothe the same experience as before with more polished graphics. Ironically enough, Call

Also available...

Aside from the War Chest, Medal Of Honor: Pacific Assault also has a GAME-exclusive 'Director's Edition' pack...





This special edition contains an exclusive light machine-gun, a WWII timeline presentation taking you through the game's events, a MOH: PA soundtrack application, more veteran interviews, some promo pieces for the army, a behind-the-scenes documentary on the making of the game and, most interestingly of all, a



video about the use of propaganda during the war (you also get a WWII propaganda poster in the box to admire).

Sadly, the game isn't any better to play as a result, but as special edition packs go, it's certainly a fine example of the art and an ideal template for other publishers to follow.



Of Duty was made by the original MOH developers following their departure from the EA machine.

REAL COMBAT

So Medal Of Honor, for all its glory at the time, hasn't aged well. Nonetheless, noone could ever dismiss the importance of the title's role in creating an entire genre of WWII shooters that pay homage to war veterans rather than glorifying killing.

To that end, the Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault War Chest special edition contains not only the full game and each expansion pack, but also a series of interviews with real-life veterans, giving weight and pathos to your in-game actions. It adds a level of depth to the game knowing that the drama playing out

impact, but MOH's theme instantly burned into your soul. It's amazing how much power those horns and strings can summon, but to listen to the music now is to be right back at the start of the whole journey, breathless with anticipation and eager to fight on.

only the original soundtrack, but also that of the Pacific Assault



The first sign that something was different was the Omaha Beach video

in front of you is a direct recreation of the actions of real men, fighting for the freedom we in the West enjoy today.

THE SOUND OF WAR

Aside from the authenticity, MOH's other contribution to the shooter genre was its early attempts at adding Hollywood production values to your gaming experience. Nowhere was that better summed up than in the game's music. Few gaming soundtracks ever make a genuine

part of that misfiring title's efforts to extend the brand. Rounding it off are a series of detailed strategy guides for each chapter of the game, guiding you through each mission and showing you how to get the most from your experience.

But is it an experience still worth encountering? MOH has aged and not for the better. Other games may look, feel and play better, but every war starts with a single shot and no-one should ever forget who pulled the trigger.

THE RAVAGES OF TIME

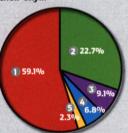


The truth hurts, but MOH ain't what it once was. Subsequent WWII realism shooters have not merely replicated the original, but superseded it with extra game features, more tactical thought and better overall presentation, atmosphere and immersion.



YOUR VIEW

Last month's subject: squad-based shooters. Let the great unwashed have their say...



BATTLEFIELD 2 lst SWAT 4 2nd

FULL SPECTRUM 3rd WARRIOR

JOINT OPS
CLOSE COMBAT:
FIRST TO FIGHT

Cal40k: "I'd have to say Battlefield. The squad leader spawn thing works really well, and the communication system makes it feel like you've got a proper role to play. I find myself sticking to the leader like glue, and actually tried to take a bullet for him a few times when things kicked off."

Moomoocow8: "SWAT 4 by a monkey's tail. It feels so right when everything goes correctly. And a Taser to the ares is such sweet amusement. Especially when someone drops a flashbang down your pants."

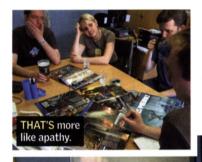
Liquid_metal: "Got to be Battlefield 2 for me, The squads flow easily and they're right in your face so you can't and shouldn't avoid them."

Deadmartyr:

"Full Spectrum
Warrior. The key
thing is that it does the
best job of streamlining
control of your squads,
and is a very efficient mix
of RTS with a third-person
camera/avatar. It's also the
best puzzle game of the lot
– and I've written a 14,000word essay on it."

136 PCZUNE November 05





OOOAAAAAGGGHHHH!
Did we scare you just then? Did we? No, well read that last bit again but this time with the lights out. And in your pants. Don't argue, just do it. Anyway, Supertest time again. Following last month's spectacular debut into the strange new world of audio, we've again brushed off our best BBC World Service voices, found a spare bit of office space free from background noise, and had a

In keeping with this month's scary theme, we're debating the merits of fright-filled gaming. The five games under scrutiny

mass dehate

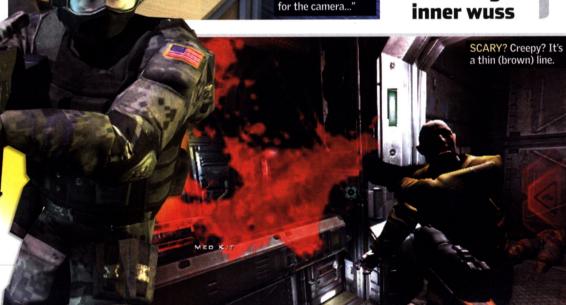
are F.E.A.R., Half-Life 2, Doom 3, Thief: Deadly Shadows and Aliens Vs Predator 2. Remember, it's not which is the best game, but which is the scariest. So fire up the coverdisc, grab the Supertest recording, slap it into your audio player of choice and sit back for 20 minutes of Prezzer revealing his inner wuss, Will recounting (at great length) his love of Thief's Cradle level, Suzy proving her girliness in Doom 3, and Jamie getting a little too excited about decapitating Half-Life 2's zombie hordes.

It's not just about us, though.
We want to hear your opinions

on this most pressing of subjects, so once you've heard us pontificate at length, head on over to the forums at www. pczone.co.uk where we'll be holding our regular reader poll. Vote for your favourite, speak your mind and next month we'll print the

results (last month's reader thoughts are to the left), along with any comments that particularly tickle us. Or scare us. Whatever the case may be...

Sit back for 20 minutes of Prezzer revealing his



"NOW look animated

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LOOKINGBACKCOMMENTARY

DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY

HALF-LIFE 2

You played it and you loved it - but what did it take to come up with Gordon's second outing?



UST HOW are your favourite games put together? Each month, we sit down with a top developer and pick over the bones of their opus. This issue, Valve's marketing director Doug Lombardi (with shades) and writer/game designer Marc Laidlaw (no shades) talk about the making of the best shooter ever - Half-Life 2...





some time with their families. Once everyone was back

from all that, the decision was made to pursue Half-Life 2. It

was agreed that Valve would self-fund the project and time

would not be a constraint. The only benchmark set for the

team was quality: make the greatest game experience you

can imagine in the Half-Life universe."



WRITING Laidlaw: "One of the key story elements that hung on technology was the extent to which we believed we'd be able to develop strong, well-rounded characters and put them in dynamic, dramatic scenes. For a long time, the character and animation systems were very rough, and those of us closest to the story had to live with a strong level of trust that the technology would eventually get to the point where we could actually implement the scenes we were sketching out.

"Writing for a *Half-Life*-style game is an ongoing collaborative effort that starts in the earliest phases of project development and doesn't really end until the game is finished. The writing of dialogue ends once all the English language voice-acting has been recorded and the script sent off to localisers; but even then, there are many little decisions regarding how the game unfolds which each affect the way a player perceives the story. However, the writing is no more (or less) important than any other element of the game, which is one obvious way in which it differs from a book, where the writing is everything."



STORY Lombardi: "We had a glimpse of the larger threat when we were working on Half-Life 1. In other words, we knew that once you cleared out the Nihilanth (end-of-game boss), you were going to discover something worse beyond it. We knew that some immense threat had chased the Nihilanth and its creatures out of their own world and into Xen, from which location they were all too glad to seize the opportunity to continue on to Earth with suppression through the citadels. But the exact nature of the threat was left to be solved in Half-Life 2."

CHICKEN

THE HALF-LIFE 2 UNIVERSE Laidlaw: "It's a classic science-fiction technique to build your world with details, any one of which could be made into a story or a book in its own right. There's something skimpy and cheap about trying to extract full-scale entertainment from every single little detail, rather than just liberally scattering them about. Some writers will take one idea and spread it very, very thin; others will take that one and five others like it and stuff them ten to a page for hundreds of pages. Guess which kind I prefer? We're trying not to be stingy, but to strike sparks and suggest more stories than can possibly be told. In a game especially, some of our fans love looking for clues that help them piece together a sense of the world, others want to get on with the shooting. We try to satisfy both camps; perhaps this is impossible, but we do try."



CUTTING-ROOM FLOOR Laidlaw: "Levels, creatures, characters and gameplay elements were in flux for a long time. Many ideas arose, became our favourites and then eventually fell by the wayside. The early plans for *HL2* called for a story that spanned the globe and covered many days, but this would have meant discontinuities in space, time and Gordon Freeman's consciousness.

"So we gradually tightened our focus on City 17 and the immediate area, and condensed the story so that all events could take place within a relatively short timespan, without requiring Gordon to sleep, black-out or do any of those other things that usually mask a transition. Every time we tightened up the game, we'd shed a level, a monster or a character. This tended to make the surviving elements stronger and ensured that we made better use of them."

The only benchmark set was quality – to make the greatest game experience possible in the *Half-Life* universe

Doug Lombardi marketing director, Valve

LOOKINGBACKCOMMENTARY

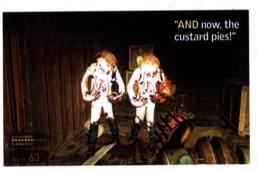


HUMOUR Laidlaw: "We tried not to force it: in the first Half-Life, the humour tended to be situational and fairly bleak, very much a part of the environment. The setting of HL2 was, if anything, even darker. However, instead of trying to cram comedy into it, we waited for opportunities to arise. We also had to be mindful of the fact that obvious gags would tend to jar people out of the game unless it was a seamless part of the experience; and at the same time, prepare

for the fact that some people would not share our sense of humour. Even people within Valve disagreed about the comedy value of certain scenes. So, we tried not to overdo it; on the other hand, when it seemed to come naturally, we didn't force ourselves to censor it either."

PHYSICS Lombardi: "The physics festered their way into the game through the results of our playtesting (which we do for months before any QA testing begins). Ravenholm, the original home of the 'physics part of the game' occurred a bit later in earlier versions, and it was the only place you had the gravity gun. But, as more and more testers told us this was gameplay they enjoyed (and we could start eliminating fears of being compared to bad experiments with physics in games), the closer Ravenholm moved to the start.'

Laidlaw: "Ravenholm and the gravity gun co-existed in our minds for a long time. The sawblades didn't appear until we'd spent some time in Ravenholm looking for things to throw...





the part - the casting agency went and asked him directly."



of that idea came from a couple who appear both in Nintendo's *Zelda: Ocarina Of Time* and *Zelda: Majora's Mask* – oblivious to their surroundings and totally absorbed in each other. I wanted to do a darker, City 17 version. It was easy to summarise the idea, but difficult to convince people it was worth the production costs. While all I had to do was write a few lines of dialogue, someone else had to pose and animate them, set them up in the level, make sure they were invulnerable to playtesters... All that added up to quite a lot of work for quite a few people and is indicative of how much thought goes into even the smallest scenes in the game."



ALYX AND DOG Laidlaw: "I sympathise with people who wanted more interaction with Alyx during Half-Life 2. I was happy with where we ended up "WILL Alyx be OK? on this, but I'm also glad now that the expansion pack Find out in the next Aftermath is giving us the opportunity to revisit some of episode of Half-Life. these partially-realised ambitions. "As for Dog, the constraints on him were many and I often found myself arguing against including him in certain scenes because I was afraid we wouldn't be able to do it right. Fortunately, certain animators shouted me down. More importantly, they then went on and did the work to make sure that wherever Dog appeared, it was more than worth the time invested."

THE ENDING Laidlaw: "I'm always surprised to hear that people found the ending sudden, since I thought from the opening scenes of the game we'd made it pretty clear where you were going to end up and who you were going to confront. It was the coolest ending we could dream up that seemed fitting to Gordon Freeman's role in the universe. I don't think a denouement would have added much to the game, and in fact would have closed some options that we're glad (in *Aftermath*) to have left open."



JEFF MINTER

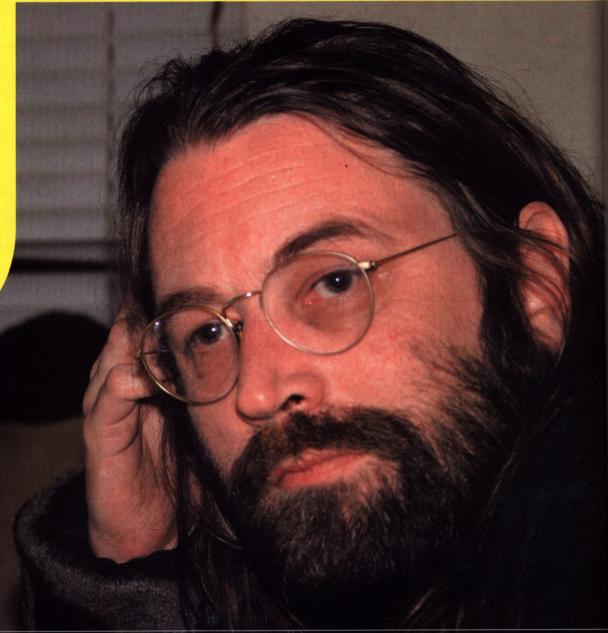
We ride the llama with the bearded creator of some of the most original and trippiest videogames ever created...

Why Do We Care?

Because he was making great games before you might even have been born, because he's cool, because Tempest 2000 remains one of the most playable arcade blasters of all time and because he defended indie development, free thinking and heroic-but-doomed hardware at the expense of big corporation dollars - right up to the moment he signed with Microsoft.

What's He **Doing Now?**

Minter developed the new light synthesiser that beats within the imminent Xbox 360 console. The official name is the 'Microsoft Xbox 360 Interactive Visualiser', but he calls it 'Neon'. Once he's finished developing game ideas using the same engine, he's planning to port them all over to the PC.



Remember These? MINTER MARVE GRIDRUNNER: It's 1982 and Minter's ATTACK OF THE MUTANT CAMELS: PSYCHEDELIA: 1984 heralds one of TEMPEST 2000: You can download first game on the C64 was one of 1983 and the weirdness begins with Minter's first light synths - "Many this and other freeware versions of the few to be updated for PC much the first of the 'beast' games - an spliffs were smoked and much Pink old Minter classics from www. later. Based on arcader Centipede. arcade update of Defender. Floyd was listened to," he recalls. llamasoft.co.uk/lc-8bit.php.

How and why did you get into the games industry?

I'd taught myself to make games for my mates on the school 'Pet' (made by Commodore in the early 1980s and one of the first successful home computers). I was about 16, there were very few decent games around, so I decided to write my own. I never thought about it as a career, I was just doing what I thought was a good thing.

Many of your bestsellers were 'homages' to arcade classics like Defender. Why didn't later classics inspire you?

I got more into doing my own thing later on. Everyone starts off doing a clone of something, but slowly you develop your own ideas. And I covered my favourite classics with Llamatron and Tempest anyway.

What do you miss most about the golden age of 8-bit programming?

It was done and dusted so quickly you could turn out a game in a month and they were small, almost instant projects. Now you're there for a year or two and you don't get the immediacy. But I wouldn't have it any other way, because look at all the stuff you can do - it's amazing. I'm doing things I couldn't imagine before. The 8-bit days were great times, but these are great times too.

You concentrated on developing for consoles for much of the '90s. Why so little for the PC?

It's a question of what was interesting at the time - PCs weren't games machines, you had CGA graphics and I chose the Atari Jaguar. It's different now, but it's still a nightmare compared to

consoles - you have to deal with so many configurations - it's a tremendous burden on developers to do all the platform checking. If you're a small company like us, with only two people working code, given the choice you'll pick consoles.

What's the fascination with beasties like llamas?

I always liked beasties - and I always liked games - so it seemed sensible to put them together. There'll always be beastie references in whatever I do - it depends on what platform I'm working on.

Having produced so many of them (Trip-A-Tron, Psychedelia etc), what's the fascination with light synthesisers?

I just always wanted to have one and no-one was making them. I first had the idea for Neon in 1990, but the tech didn't exist for a modular visual synthesiser, the hardware wasn't up to it: now it is. It's very compact, very efficient and produces fantastic visuals. It takes things to a new level; others will look at it and they'll have to raise their game. Plus, great visualisation software will follow, which is good for everyone, whatever platform.



What was your best game and platform?

Ancipital on the Commodore 64 although Llamatron was the most universally accessible. Platform-wise. I enjoyed the Atari Jaguar - it was new and experimental, a big step up on anything else around at the time.

You have a reputation for picking lost causes when it comes to hardware (Jaguar, the ill-fated Nuon console). Why is that?

I work on things that interest me. Nuon arose because some friends from Atari were starting up and asked if I wanted to get involved to have a part in the chip design, which I'd never done before. I had other offers from larger companies, but I chose that. I'm not motivated by the most money and Microsoft isn't exactly a lost cause...

Any current game you would have liked to work on?

Katamari Damacy (insane Japanese PlayStation 2 game). It's superb, full of humour and totally unique. I would have put the right 'baah' sound in though. At the moment, if you roll over a sheep it makes a goat sound - that really annoys me!

Any advice for would-be farmers and/or games developers?

Make stuff you love, don't watch the market. Games development won't always be about big business: now that distribution is online, smaller publishers and platforms have a chance. You don't have to be hooked up to a big company to succeed.

..And Microsoft?

I don't work for them - I work with them...

At the moment, if you roll over a sheep it makes a goat sound – that really annoys me!



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Hardware Photography In-house
Origination ColourFlow 020 7323 0022
Printed in the UK by Southern Print
Distribution Marketforce (UK)

GOBLINS

GOBLINS
Publisher James Ashton-Tyler
Group Publishing Director Mia Roberts
Games Group Ad Manager Darren Gratton
Product Manager Ben Payne
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Distributed by Marketforce (UK) Ltd. 5th Floor, Low Rise Building, Kings Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London, SE1 9LS. Tel 0207 633 3300

Printed in the UK by Wyndeham Heron Ltd, The Bentall Complex, Colchester Road, Heybridge, Malden, Essex, CM9 7NW



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SUBSCRIPTIONS HOTLINE: 0870 442 0957

BACK ISSUES: 0870 442 0957

NEXT ISSUE: PCZ #161

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NEXTMONTH

Lights! Camera! Action! PC ZONE dusts off the red carpet and squeezes into its dinner jacket as we bring you the world premiere review of Lionhead's latest blockbuster. Plus, you can create your own big-screen heart-throb with the sublime StarMaker demo...





Having a flank in our



AGE OF **FMPIRES III**

Ensemble Studios' Bruce Shelley interviewed!



PRO EVO 5 Gooaaall! Exclusive review and demo!



Super furry animals galore. Full review!

REVIEWS: DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE **BLITZKRIEG II** DRAGONSHARD **EVERQUEST II:** DESERT OF FLAMES

Loads more gaming on a shoestring in Freeplay, Steve Hill's NeverQuest and Dominik Diamond tackles porn!

THE NEW-LOOK PC ZONE ON SALE OCTOBER 13!

DOMINIK DIAMOND

When *PC ZONE* asked me to write this column, my remit was to focus the world of PC gamin in a jovial manner. I've now embraced *Minesweeper*. I'm sure it's what they had in mind...

l've got two kids and another on the way, and they all need beer time you joined me I had just unpacked my brand spanking new, utterly fantastic Alienware PC and reached a state of semi-erectness at the shape of it alone. However, flaccidity entered towards the bottom of said column when I realised that it didn't come with a monitor.

Since then, the editor's sorted me out with an NEC Multisync LCD 1970GX, which I have to say is the best you can buy. Or be given. In addition, Saitek sent me a box rammed to the tits with a special gaming keyboard, mouse, joypad and the fearsome-looking Cyborg Evo Wireless Joystick. The last time I saw a

weapon with this much purpose it was being wielded by Ron Jeremy.

I'm still using a pair of old shitty portable speakers though, so if you work for Logitech or Creative Labs, then send me stuff. Don't worry if it arrives after your rival's kitted me out – I'm more than happy to stick it on eBay. I know some people think I'm loaded because I'm on telly all the time on those talking-head clip shows, but the shitbags just pay you a one-off fee of a few hundred quid and then repeat them for years. I've got two kids and another one on the way, and they all need beer.

BRAVE NEW WORLD

Putting aside the fact that I'm operating in a borderline mute gaming environment on a shoestring, I bravely soldier on into the fantastic world of PC Gaming. And smother me with my own bum produce – it's brilliant!

I played this game called *Minesweeper*.

Talk about graphical excellence! Never have
I seen a 10x10 grid of grey tiles
reproduced so accurately. I don't
know what exactly is inside this
NVIDIA graphics card, but it's
gotta be sweating like Michael
Jackson's defence lawyer to
produce this visual devilry.

And gameplay? It's a

learn, but a lifetime to master'. Like *Manic Miner*. Or Buckaroo. There's no *Da Vinci Code*-sized instruction manual, just the almost

return to the old school

thinking of 'a minute to

enigmatic sentence: "The object of Minesweeper is to locate all the mines as quickly as possible without uncovering any of them. If you uncover a mine, you lose the game."

WINNING SMILE

We're talking a minimalistic third-person war sim. But inside the game lurks real emotion. There's a smiley face at the top of the screen (pre-rendered 2D polygons using the Unreal 3 engine, I suspect). The smiley face stays there til the moment you uncover a mine and are dead. Then it's replaced by a sad face with crosses for eyes.

Now I've never fought in an oceanbased conflict, but I like to think that this is exactly what it would have been like. Nowt but smiles. Then you die. And you're sad. It's the instant brutality of Peckenpah mixed with the bare emotion of Beckett.

Longevity? The bastards have got this covered too. You can ramp this baby up to expert level of 15×30 , or better still customise it until there are so many squares, your eyes bleed when you try and count them.

Given my reputation, you probably expect me to be controversial in this column. Well how about this: 'Compared to *Minesweeper*, *Full Spectrum Warrior* can f*** itself to hell'. Yes sirree, Mr Gates – you can stick that on the billboard!

Next month, I'm looking forward to a brilliant online PC game Will Porter recommended to me called *Porn*. I assume it's for serious gamers because he said it's hardcore.

